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NOVEMBER 2004

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CURTAIN CALL

*How NCLB is dimming the
lights on the arts and
other subjects* PAGE 20

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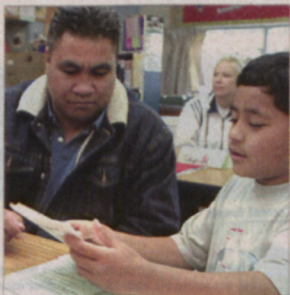
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features

COVER 20

Curtain Call

With pressure mounting to demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” under the so-called No Child Left Behind law, more and more schools have cut back on art, music, theater, and dance to make way for “core subjects” like math and reading. But when the curtain falls, what else is lost?

PARENT TEACHER
CONFERENCETurning the
Tables 36

When students take charge at a new kind of parent conference, they take responsibility for their own learning. At the same time, educators find more parents in attendance.



STORM SEASON

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After four hurricanes slammed into Florida, leaving dozens of your colleagues homeless, it took an all-hands effort to get school started again.

CLASSROOM
MANAGEMENTCyber-
Cheating 40

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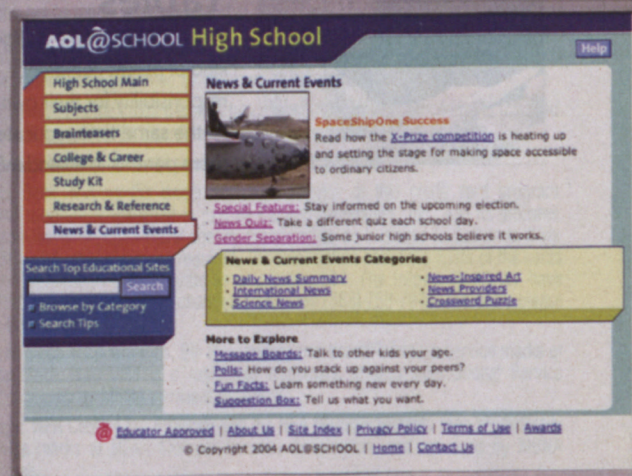
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Jose Almeida

Science Teacher
John A. Ferguson Senior
High School, Miami, FL





SPOTLIGHT

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After years of pain, educators and parents in a tiny Wisconsin town decide they've had enough. In 10-degree weather, they march to the polls and mount an educational revolution.

ESP

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With concerns over "respect, money, and job demands," nearly 3,000 education support professionals voted for Pennsylvania State Education Association representation.

HEALTH & FITNESS

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Consider the chalk dust, the runny noses, and the strain on your voice. It's no surprise that educators have a higher rate of some medical problems than other professionals. Take our advice to stay healthy!

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What should you do when kids wander the halls? How do you reach the homework haters? And, anybody using good materials for poetry lessons? The answers to these questions, and more.

PEOPLE

It's a Twister, Something To Say 52

When a tornado struck his school, eighth-grade teacher Phil Severson's first thoughts were for his students. His second? "How the hell am I going to get out of here!" Also, meet children's author Alice Faye Duncan (at right).

LASTBELL

An 'A' Should Be an 'A' 64

Sure, kids and families move. But should their report cards be so hard to nail down? In the name of fairness and accuracy, a mother and NEA student member calls for standardized report cards.



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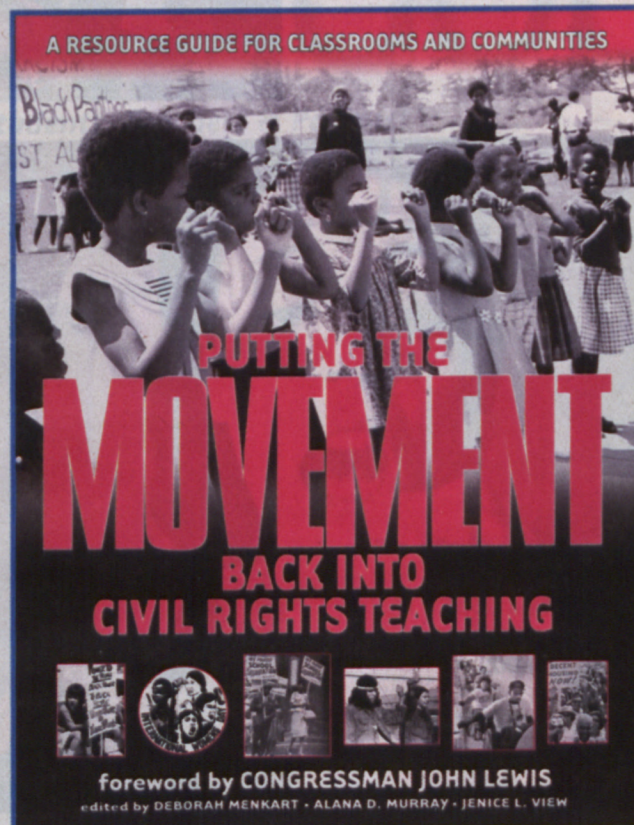
63 MARKETPLACE

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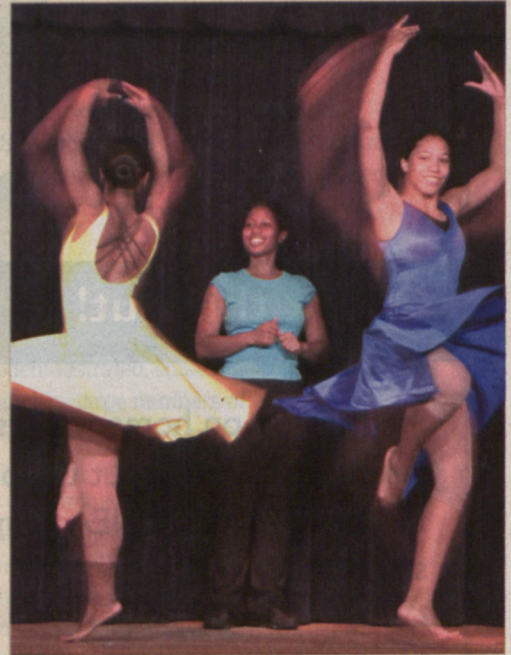
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Sweet Inspiration

Imagine, for a moment, a life without music or art. No Bach or Coltrane during the drive time home. No Thursday night salsa or Sunday morning gospel. No museum strolls, nights at the opera, Shakespeare on the lawn. No (gasp!) Aretha. ¶ Can you stand it? ¶ Of course not. This is the stuff that gives us life. It uplifts, soothes, transports us to places faraway and long ago. Helps us love, connect, think. ¶ We need it—and so, too, our kids. ¶ That's why, in this last issue of *NEA Today* before Election Day, we look at the valiant struggle of educators to keep the arts alive in our schools—not a new battle, but a far more formidable one since the passage of the so-called No Child Left Behind law. Turns out, many school administrators, under pressure to raise reading and math scores (or else), have almost wiped out the powerful teaching of music, art, dance, and drama, and even curtailed mainstay subjects like social studies and physical education. It's one of the more pitiable fallouts of high-stakes testing. ¶ And what a shame. ¶ Looking at photos from several arts-enriched schools reported on by *NEA Today's* Kristen Loschert—delightful photos of determined first-graders transforming themselves into pups; of high schoolers living out history through provocative theater; of teachers joyously nurturing their students' capacity to give and create—you have to wonder why the dilemma at all. ¶ But what's new? You live these ironies every day, yet you just keep fighting—for students who can revel in the joy of a play, a science project, a civics lesson; who can see the life in a still, who can appreciate Mozart, Miles, and Jay-Z, too. ¶ It is this steady commitment that we hope will empower you to speak your mind on November 2—and in a thousand elections, debates, and school board meetings beyond. This is, after all, the beginning of that famous season of promise—a ripe time to celebrate the possibility for change and an even riper time to give a nod to the renewing power of the arts. ¶ So go ahead. Vote. Make a fuss. Then get out your paintbrushes, belt out a holiday tune, and dance with the Nutcracker. We'll see you, newly inspired, next year. ¶ Happy holidays!



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NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published eight times a year, monthly, in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *NEA Today*, Attn: NEA Business & Finance Address Change, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202-822-7065.

Members: To change address, see information below.

NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription prices: \$65 for institution subscriptions; \$100 for individual domestic and foreign subscriptions. For members, subscriptions represent \$4.55 of annual dues.

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

'Vote for Change this Election Day'

I've made an amazing discovery: the cloud of rhetoric surrounding this election is so dense that many NEA members are confused about the cause of their misery.

Let me set the record straight. Your local superintendents and school boards didn't dream up one-size-fits-all testing and wrapping your job in red tape; this Administration and the so-called No Child Left Behind law are responsible. Your local superintendents and school boards didn't outlaw overtime pay or allow out-of-control health care costs to eat up your paycheck; this Administration and its economic policies are responsible.

safety net, and further widen the divide between the haves and have-nots.

On November 2, we must not fail to exercise the voting rights secured by the blood, sweat, and tears of those who have come before us. In 1865 the 15th Amendment ensured that after nine decades of our nation's history Black men could vote. Women didn't get voting rights until 1920, with the passage of the 20th Amendment, and American Indians waited four years for a federal law declaring them U.S. citizens.

Yet one-person, one-vote is still not a reality. As the 2000 presidential election reminded us, the candidate who wins the popular vote does not always carry the Electoral College. As that election demonstrated, small manipulations of the rules can disenfranchise large numbers of voters.

It's threatening to happen again. Across the nation a number of election violations are occurring. In Florida, where just 537 votes determined the outcome in 2000,

reports say that police officers have intimidated elderly Black voters under the pretext of investigating voter fraud. In Ohio, officials have tried to disqualify voters who registered using forms printed on ordinary paper instead of heavier stock—the kind used for paperback book covers and postcards.

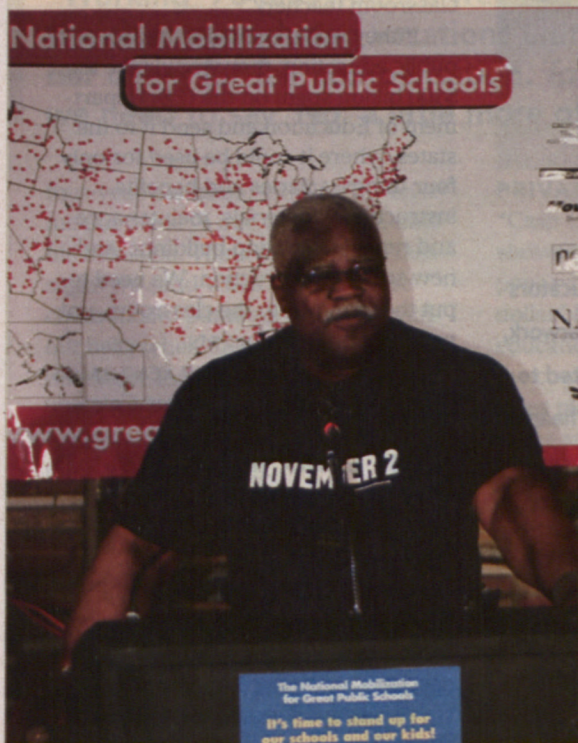
My friends, we cannot allow what happened in 2000 to happen again. We must show up at the polls, vigilantly fight voter suppression, and vote for friends of public education.

This election, now just days away, could determine whether public education will survive. And Team NEA could cast the deciding vote! In a presidential election that could be decided by 1 percent or less, we represent 5 percent of the votes in the battleground states.

Some people say one vote doesn't matter. Don't you believe it! Every vote counts. Be sure to vote and when you do, ask yourself: Do I want four more years of the same? Or do I want change?

I urge you to support the recommendation of the NEA Representative Assembly and vote for John Kerry—Vote For Change This Election Day!

—REG WEAVER



Now, let's look at what four more years of this Administration will bring. An effort to expand the so-called No Child Left Behind law to include high stakes testing in even more high school grades, rapidly escalating college and university tuition costs, and increased voucher challenges. We can also anticipate ever-higher health care costs and the privatizing of Social Security. In short, four more years of this Administration will effectively shred our social

Reg Weaver
NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER



SPEAK UP, GET INVOLVED

In Kentucky, we're dealing with many of the same pressures voiced by educators in "Decision Time" (cover story, October): unfunded mandates, more paperwork, increased pressure to raise test scores. I became a teacher because I wanted to look into a kid's eyes and see the lights go on. With all the mandates being heaped on us, we have less time to make that kind of connection.

The only way to turn the situation around is to find where your ideas will have the most leverage, and then speak up and get involved.

In my state, we're fighting drastic increases in health insurance costs. I work with folks who can't afford the cost of their health insurance premiums, so they go without. Others find the expense of family coverage eats up their whole paycheck.

Just this year, I've testified to the state legislature and done radio spots, and thousands of Kentucky educators attended rallies on September 27 to protest health insurance cuts. But you don't have to stand on a street corner and shout to make a difference. The power rests in all those people who make phone calls and send e-mails to their legislators with their personal message. One voice can make a difference: persistence and exercising our rights really does bring about change.

LYNN BATES
Grayson, Kentucky

I was disappointed by the partisanship displayed in the October issue. The NEA is supposed to represent all its teachers, without regard for race, background, orientation, or any religious or ideological affiliation. Why does NEA feel called upon to attempt to sway or even prescribe the voice of its members? Do not assume that all teachers will appreciate such officiousness. Totally aside from my own political leanings, I can definitely say that I do not.

JORDANA LONG
Gloucester, Virginia

I read with interest your interview with John Kerry in the September issue. I am a conservative Republican and a staunch union supporter. Mr. Kerry did not address the real reason there is a teacher shortage: poor salaries and benefits! The one question you should ask all of your candidates is: "what have you done for the classroom teacher?"

If they really wanted to improve public education, they would take the \$100 billion spent on the U.S. Department of Education and send it to the states, where it could be used for only four things: salaries and benefits, instructional materials, maintenance and repair of existing buildings, and new school construction. We need to put the money into the classroom, not pay for more bureaucrats.

ANDREW KENT JAUSSI
Denver, Colorado

THOSE EXTRA HOURS ARE WORTH SOMETHING

While I appreciated Jack Costello's comments ("A Teacher's Worth," October), I also believe part of the problem is that so many of us are willing to work the kinds of hours Jack describes without compensation. Yes, we all take work home just to stay afloat. But working "70-plus-hours a week" and "sneaking" into the classroom during vacations ultimately undermines our quest for fair compensation. Why would any employer pay more for what we're clearly willing to do for free? To achieve fair pay, we need to say "No" a little more often.

MAEGEN BLUE
Puyallup, Washington

SEAT BELTS ON BUSES

I have to side with Frank Hyden's argument against requiring that students wear seat belts on school buses (Debate, October). I have driven some buses and I know that there isn't any way for a driver to see if a student is buckled up without leaving his or her seat to check. The only way that seat belts would be successful on a school bus would be to have an aide on every bus to guarantee that every student is buckled in. Maybe instead of wasting more money on No Child Left Behind, the federal government should consider No Bus Without An Aide.

DAVE ARNOLD
Brownstown, Illinois

As educators, we know that the most-received message is a consistent one. My two grandchildren have always been in car seats and seat belts. My

which members of Congress allowed the government to keep taking away our money.

THOMAS DRISCOLL
Keene, New Hampshire

In the October issue, you wrote about John Duncan, who is subject to the Windfall Elimination Provision. But he—and perhaps other educators—may avoid the penalty if they were eligible to retire from Social Security and from their employer-provided retirement plan as of 1985, even if they did not actually retire at that time. I am a retired educator and found that not even my Social Security intake workers were aware of this “grandfather” clause that allows some people relief from the WEP penalties.

JACK DAY
Ballwin, Missouri

give Edison Schools a bad name because of a bad leadership team at a school. Plenty of educators like me love teaching at an Edison school.

ROBYN DOLAN
Las Vegas, Nevada

Your article asked about the Milwaukee voucher program, “what does it take to open a school?” I’ve often wondered what it would take to close this failed experiment. An annual evaluation of the voucher program’s first five years showed gains in academic achievement were “insignificant.” The Wisconsin legislature’s response was to expand the program and discontinue further evaluation of it. I’d really like *NEA Today* to do a more in-depth piece on the Milwaukee voucher experiment.

RICHARD HANSEN
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

“Working ‘70-plus-hours a week’ and ‘sneaking’ into the classroom during vacations ultimately undermines our quest for fair compensation. To achieve fair pay, we need to say ‘No’ a little more often.” —MAEGEN BLUE

four-year-old grandson won’t even let me put the keys into the ignition until his belt is on. Think of the mixed messages we send when we take these children and put them on buses without belts when they turn five. There is no excuse for not having children in seat belts in private vehicles, and there is no good excuse for not providing them in school buses.

JOE SYNK
Chandler, Arizona

PENALIZING RETIREMENT

Once or twice a year you have an encouraging article (Spotlight, October) about a bill in Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). It only gives us false hope.

I spoke with my Congressman, who told me the bill will likely never get out of committee. He said the WEP was there before he got to Congress, disclaiming any responsibility for it.

Nothing will happen unless we make a bigger noise. Let Congress know that you’ll do a big headline about this bill and will print a list of

PRIVATIZATION'S PITFALLS

“Cash Cow” (cover story, September) shows the stark reality of what happens when pursuit of the “almighty dollar” leads to privatizing public education. In Florida, I’ve witnessed the continual turnover of workers that takes place when school districts privatize services. It’s the children who lose! They receive less positive influence and special guidance from role models such as bus drivers, janitors, cafeteria workers, and other dedicated public employees. Thanks for the in-depth coverage of this issue.

JOAN KING
Orlando, Florida

I have worked for an Edison partnership school for almost two years. The problems you described in Laurie Mozlin’s school sounded like administrative issues, not Edison issues. The Edison design gives students a longer school day, a research-based curriculum to learn, and technology to use. None of the problems described in the article exist in our school. Please don’t

FLORIDA PICKS ITSELF UP

We in Jupiter, Florida, were knocked out by hurricanes Frances and Jeanne, but we’re slowly picking ourselves up. Thousands are still without electricity, many schools have roof damage and lack power, and hundreds of our children are afraid that this will continue until the end of hurricane season. Some of our students have had to relocate with their families to apartments until their homes are repaired.

I know the whole nation is with us in getting our lives back to normal, and I just wanted to say that we appreciate it very much.

JANICE POIRIER
Jupiter, Florida

LET'S TALK

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Upfront

Trends
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Test and Punish

If you thought things couldn't get worse, consider this: The number of schools subject to punishment under the so-called "No Child Left Behind" law has skyrocketed. Title I schools face stiff consequences if they fail for two years to meet the dozens of test score and attendance targets that together make up what the law calls "adequate yearly progress" (AYP). It's been two years since the law has been in effect, and the tallying has begun.

IN THE 39 STATES reporting their AYP results by NEA Today's press deadline, the number of schools that missed AYP for two or more years reached 6,794, or 12 percent of the schools in those states—nearly double the number as last year. As a result, Title I schools in this group must now let parents transfer their children to other schools at the district's expense—even if the receiving schools have no space. And the penalties just get stiffer for schools that miss AYP again.

On the bright side, most states had fewer schools that missed AYP for at least one year. Last year, nearly a third of the nation's schools missed AYP. Unfortunately, this year's results are not comparable to last year's because some of the federal rules have shifted and some states are applying the rules differently.

Next year, things likely will get worse because the AYP standards will be even higher. Several states predict that nearly every school eventually will fail as the standards keep going up—unless educators persuade Congress and the President to fix the law. To help, go to www.nea.org/lac.

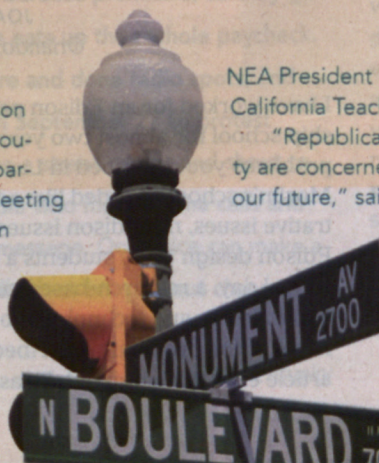


Party Nation

Lights burned brightly across America on September 22 as supporters of public education gathered to talk about our schools. Tens of thousands of participants attended 3,600 "house parties" in homes, libraries, schools, and other meeting places—from a chapel in Maui to a brewery on Cape Cod—to put education high on the national agenda. A coalition of more than 50 pro-public school organizations, including NEA, sponsored the events, which included a Los Angeles party attended by

NEA President Reg Weaver, actress Helen Hunt, and California Teachers Association President Barbara Kerr. "Republican or Democrat, people in our community are concerned about our children's education and our future," said William Innes, a Republican teacher in Vallejo, California. "The folks who met at my house believe the White House and Congress haven't done enough for public education."

For more house party coverage, see page 17.



See Dick and Jane Get Hip



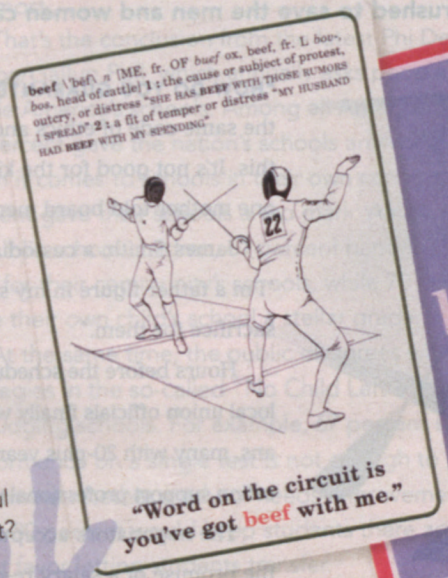
OK class, **pop quiz**. Who knows the meaning of the word '**BOMB**'? If you're thinking lethal military hardware, **give yourself an F**.

ANY TEEN will tell you it means something is great.

If you feel like your students are speaking a foreign language, take heart. Help has arrived in the form of slang flashcards developed by a Venice, California, novelty company. Yes, the same tools you use to teach letters and times tables can now help you learn to speak teen. Each card includes a catchword on one side and a pronunciation guide, definition, synonyms, and helpful illustration on the other. Still lost? The card also offers the term used in a sentence. The box even claims to help the "nerdy, uncool" and those "over 30...start talking street almost immediately."

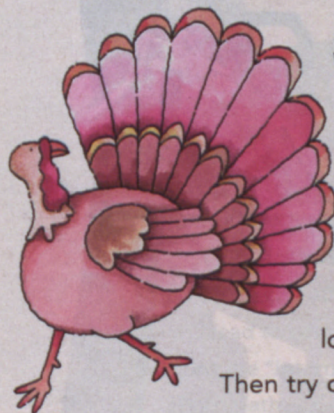
So, ready to try another?

How about "crunk," as in "the Tupperware party will be mad crunk." If you answered "providing entertainment," well, you da bomb.



beef

Feeling Stuffed?



With Americans devouring 667 million pounds of turkey on Thanksgiving—that's 2 1/4 pounds per person—it's no wonder you're feeling full! Take it easy this year and save some bird for later. Turkey is both low in fat and high in protein, making it the perfect lunch to pack into the cafeteria or teachers' lounge. Looking for ways to make over your leftovers?

Then try one of these ideas:

TURKEY SANDWICHES! Think about adding slices of apple and cheddar.

EASY TURKEY SOUP. Just toss in some celery, carrots, and wild rice.

TURKEY SALAD. Go easy on the carbs after piling on the potatoes!

TURKEY STIR-FRY. Try mixing in apricot preserves at the end.

FOR THE KIDS? Fried turkey nuggets with yummy dipping sauces are a sure hit.

Notepad

Experiment Ends Badly

Six thousand students were locked out of their classrooms and hundreds of teachers abruptly lost their jobs, when the California Charter Academy, the largest chain of publicly financed but privately run charter schools, closed its doors earlier this year.

The chain of 60 storefront charter schools had been put together by Steven Cox, a former insurance executive, and took in more than \$100 million in state funds. But Cox ran into trouble with state officials, who accused him of violating state law, and the chain appeared near bankruptcy before its curt exit.

Take Action on IDEA

After more than two-and-a-half years of work, the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has stalled in Congress. Before the current legislative session ends next month, Congress still needs to reconcile the key differences between the House bill passed in April 2003 and the Senate bill passed this spring. Critical issues, such as fixing the definition of a "highly qualified" special education teacher, remain in limbo. For more on the reauthorization, visit www.nea.org/lac/idea or e-mail pralabate@nea.org and join NEA's IDEA activist listserv.

Have a great idea?

> Send it by mail:

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No Strangers in Our Schools!

When school board members in Garden City, Michigan, announced plans this year to fire their custodial staff and replace them with lower-paid, non-union private employees, hundreds of parents rushed to save the men and women caring for their kids.



"HOW DO YOU GUARANTEE that private custodians will have the same code of ethics and love for my child? We don't want this. It's not good for the kids and it's not the right thing to do," one mother told board members.

James Smith, a custodian whose job was threatened, agreed. "I'm a father figure in my school. We take care of these kids. We sacrifice for them."

Hours before the scheduled vote, pressure from parents and local union officials finally worked. The jobs of at least 50 custodians, many with 20-plus years of service, were saved when the education support professional negotiating unit settled with the district.

The negotiators accepted a wage freeze for this year, with the promise of a salary re-opener next year, and retained all fringe benefits, including health insurance. Four custodians will be laid off but offered work as substitutes.

They Gotta Have It

Remember when kids went off to college with just a few bags and a fat pillow? These days, a deflated bank account is more like it.

START WITH the ever-essential white board so new pals can stay in touch—just \$10. Aiming for extra popularity? Grab a \$60 mini-fridge that chills a can of, uh, soda in 60 seconds or a plug-in ice maker for \$300.

The average college freshman spends a whopping \$1,205 to prepare their new dorm rooms, more than half of it on electronic equipment, according to a recent National Retail Federal survey. In all, college kids and their parents throw down \$8.8 billion on textbooks; \$7.5 billion on electronics; \$3.2 billion on clothing and accessories; \$2.6 billion on towels, sheets, desk lamps, and other furnishings; and \$1.5 billion on shoes.

That's right, just shoes.



A Vote of Confidence

Despite a constant barrage of attacks that claim American schools are failing, most parents aren't buying it.



AND THOSE WHO KNOW schools the best, like them the most.

That's the conclusion from the latest Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, which annually asks people to grade America's schools. Among all Americans polled, 26 percent gave the nation's schools an A or a B. But when it comes to schools in their own communities, 47 percent gave their schools a top mark. Among parents of public school children, 61 percent handed out an A or B for their community's schools, while 70 percent gave their own child's school a stellar grade.

At the same time, the public disagrees with the strategies in the so-called "No Child Left Behind" law for judging schools. For example, 67 percent said performance on a single test is not enough to determine whether a school needs improvement. And

if a school does need improvement, 80 percent would keep students there and work on fixing the school; only 16 percent favor letting students transfer.

Think Calming Thoughts

When most kids "meditate" in class, they usually drift off to dreamland and not to the land of inner peace. But a recent study found secondary school students in Richmond County, Georgia, who participated in twice-daily meditation sessions, woke up to healthier lives.



RESEARCH PUBLISHED in the *American Journal of Hypertension* this year showed that when stressed-out African-American students meditated for 15 minutes every morning and afternoon, they had lower blood-pressure levels. And that, some say, will lead to better academic performance. Anxiety, stress, or other negative emotions are "internal noise," says Rollin McCraty, research director at the Institute of HeartMath, a California nonprofit that developed TestEdge, an anti-anxiety program for students. McCraty's research shows test scores improved 14 to 35 percent when kids practiced anti-anxiety techniques.

But there's no reason the benefits of less stress should be confined to the other side of the teacher's desk. So breathe deeply, close your eyes, and relax.

Global Takes

Learning in India

India's new government is preparing legislation to finally make education free and compulsory for all children. More than half of children now leave school with fewer than five years of education, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said in the national newspaper *The Hindu*. He promised the government will back its plans with funding.

Laboring in England

British students ages 14 and older are heading to the office this fall under a new national policy designed to get all students ready for the world of work. "It is for high-flyers, it is for people who are disaffected, it is for everyone," according to a British educator whose comments appeared in the *Independent* newspaper. Almost all 14- to 16-year-olds will work with local companies for about two weeks.

No Bullying in Norway

Norway is trying to stamp out bullying in its schools with a campaign that includes classroom discussions, essay writing, rap music competitions, and student mediation programs, a Reuters dispatch reports. Many schools have seen a sharp decrease in physical bullying, although students say "psychological bullying" still occurs.

Have a good story?

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The Cash Cure-All?

Studies have long shown that children of poverty tend, on average, to act out in class more than those who come from families with more resources.

Experts, though, rarely suggest throwing cash at the situation. But researchers at Duke University in North Carolina inadvertently discovered that money could help. They were studying several types of psychological problems among children in rural North Carolina, one-quarter of whom lived on a Cherokee reservation. Some of the children lived in poverty, while others did not.

HALFWAY THROUGH the eight-year study, a casino opened on the reservation that provided a new source of revenue for members of the tribe, including some of the low-income families in the study. Children from those families exhibited less stubbornness, stealing, bullying, vandalism, and fewer temper tantrums after their families received the financial boost. In fact, they started behaving as well as children in the study who had never been poor. The children who remained poor, however, showed no such improvement.

How did the cash improve the children's school behavior? The researchers said it allowed parents to spend more time with their children, according to their report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Percent of **PARENTS** who believe parents need to be more **INVOLVED** at their children's schools.

BOOK FOCUS

Surrounded By Stories

In *I Am a Pencil: A Teacher, His Kids, and Their World of Stories* (Henry Holt, 2004), children's author Sam Swope recounts his struggle to "get through" to a group of struggling students who have a lot to learn and, as it turns out, a lot to teach.

The book chronicles Swope's experiences running a 10-day writing workshop for third-graders in Queens, New York. Through his attempts to coax the awkward learners, Swope finds himself drawn to the financially poor but story-rich lives of his 28 students, and ends up staying for three years. On one assignment, we see Swope coaching Jessica on how to turn a sentence into a poem, until, finally, it clicks: "I am a pencil/Ready to write/My life."

Swope skillfully sketches the subtle dramas besetting a classroom of children in tough situations. On discovering a disturbing personal revelation in a child's piece,

Swope worries about pushing her too far.

"How do you teach a kid to bravely follow her imagination, even when it's scary?" he reflects. "And should you?"

This is not a how-to book, nor does it flaunt prescriptions. Swope's aim is more modest—to encourage kids to, in his words, "occasionally look closely at the world and notice things that make you wonder."

For many, that will be more than enough.

I Am a Pencil

A TEACHER, HIS KIDS, AND THEIR WORLD OF STORIES



Major Mentoring

Sink or swim, that's the American way when it comes to learning to teach.

BUT VETERAN TEACHERS in Centerville, Ohio, wanted something better for their district's new recruits. So the Centerville Classroom Teachers Association (CCTA) joined forces with the school district to provide each rookie teacher with a mentor. And, so far, the program has succeeded. At a time when nearly half of all new teachers leave the profession within their first five years, 96 percent of Centerville's first-year teachers return for a second year.

The program tries to pair together teachers who work in the same building and teach similar classes. The district also hires subs for eight days during the year so the mentor-mentee pairs can watch each other at work. Administrators cannot ask mentors how the new teachers are doing either. And new teachers appreciate that.

"They were kind of like a confidant, someone we could talk to and who we knew wouldn't get us in trouble," says Jessica Heronemus, a second-year middle school English teacher who completed the program last year.

Jessica Heronemus (above right) plans to use many of the teaching techniques she learned from her mentor, **Beth Fischer** (left).



Two-Minute Tips

Behavior Chart

I have a behavior chart behind my door and each student has a pocket with his or her name on it that contains five colored slips. Whenever a student misbehaves, he or she removes one of the slips from the pocket and replaces it with a laminated copy of the classroom rule the student broke. At the end of the day I know which rules students broke and have more specific information to share with parents.

—KATHY THOMPSON
Durham, North Carolina

Flip Chart Trick

To make an inexpensive flip chart, turn an old notebook inside out, make a base out of cardboard, and attach it with duct tape.

—JANIS HIGHLEY
Battle Ground, Washington

Hanging Posters

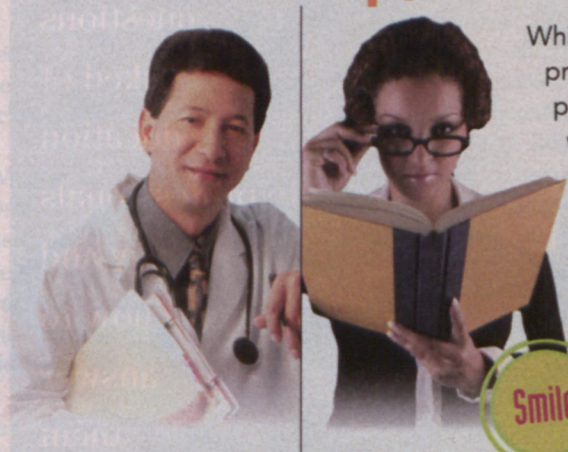
To hang posters on cement walls, I laminate the posters and put hook-and-loop tape on the back of each one. I stick the corresponding part of the tape to the walls the same distance apart as on the backs of the posters. This way, I can change the posters during the year without removing the tape from the posters. The adhesive on the tape also does not damage the paint on the walls.

—BETTY COPELAND
Crestview, Florida

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What's Up, Doc?



While my kindergartners were practicing for their Thanksgiving play, our school principal came by with our district's assistant superintendent and proudly introduced "Dr. M" to the class. After the visitors left, a student asked me, "Is the principal sick?" I replied, "No, why do you ask?" The student responded, "Well, why did he bring his doctor to school?" I had to explain that there are other kinds of doctors besides the ones we visit when we are sick!

—MOLLY KOEHLE
Kindergarten teacher
Altoona, Pennsylvania

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questions
asked of
education
professionals
today and
how to
answer
them

David L. Smith & Lynn Coffin

Partying Hard for Public Education

National effort to raise awareness and spur action a 'whopping' success.

A night to remember? You bet. On September 22, tens of thousands of Association members, community activists, and everyday folk made their way to locally organized "house parties" for public education. It was the kickoff for the National Mobilization for Great Public Schools, and supporters around the country pulled out all the stops. They gathered at nearly 3,600 parties held not only in homes, but in public libraries, churches, school buildings, and quite a few unexpected places. One party was hosted in a brewery on Cape Cod, another in a yoga studio, another on a boat. And while some participants may have



"WE ALL HAVE the responsibility to reach out and connect with the larger community so that people know...how committed we are to providing a quality public education for every student." —REG WEAVER

really partied afterward, they spent much of the evening getting down to the business of planning how to make public schools a priority in their local communities and beyond.

"Tonight is just the beginning," NEA President Reg Weaver said at a Hollywood, California, party co-hosted by Oscar-winning actress Helen Hunt and film producers Julie Bergman Sender and Stuart Sender. Elected officials must be held accountable for providing schools the resources they need, he said, and he encouraged the crowd to join the groundswell of support to "fix and fund" the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB).

Elsewhere, national, state, and local Association leaders rallied around the same message. For NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen, the locale was Iowa (where she attended two parties). For NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel, it was Milwaukee. For high school English teacher Angela Dunmore, new president of the Cape Henlopen Education Association in rural Milton, Delaware, it was the lobby of a television station. And for fourth-grade teacher Carol Bauer, it was an elementary school in Yorktown, Virginia, where everyone wore construction hats as they

"hammered" through issues such as overcrowding, testing, NCLB, and professional respect for teachers.

But party-goers did more than just talk. They signed petitions for more funding for public schools, pledged to call their members of Congress on a national phone blitz day on September 29, and committed themselves to voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts. Most important, they expressed a determination to build a movement for great public schools. As Eskelsen noted about the party she attended, hosted by Iowa's first lady: "We were yakking away two-and-a-half hours later. People were so animated."

Van Roekel said the excitement over the parties—which generated media attention across the country—was evident to him before even the first one began. He recounted how he went online the morning of September 22 to see how many house parties were being hosted in his area. "I found a whopping 50 within 25 miles of my house!" he said. "I think that says a lot about the success of the parties and the enthusiasm of our members to get involved."

Now, said Eskelsen, it's just a question of doing the work. "We've articulated our frustrations and our fears, but we can't just wallow in it," she said. "What are we going to do to put these issues out front and put candidates on the spot?" On September 22, she said, "people felt they could do something about it."

And, as Weaver noted to the Hollywood crowd, there's plenty to do. "We all have the responsibility to reach out and connect with the larger community so that people know



NEA President **Reg Weaver**, with party co-host **Helen Hunt**, discusses how to build a movement for great public schools. NEA Secretary-Treasurer **Lily Eskelsen** (above at left) rallies education supporters with a protest song.

who we are, what we do, and how committed we are to providing a quality public education for every student," he said.

—NANCY KOCHUK

ON THE BUS! At press time, President Weaver and dozens of NEA's national and state leaders had set out on a seven-state bus tour to drum up support for public education and for NEA's recommended presidential candidate, John Kerry. They started out in hurricane-ravaged Florida on October 4 and were planning to move on to Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, all before Election Day.

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Fighting for Kids' Civil Rights

ALASKA NEA-Alaska (NEA-AK) has joined a lawsuit that charges the state with violating its constitution by not investing in adequate K-12 education for all students and by treating "children of differing circumstances differently." The plaintiffs are asking that the court order a cost analysis of a constitutionally "adequate" education, and then require the state to foot the bill.

The money's there. While Alaska has enjoyed unparalleled wealth over the past 20 years, the state has systematically reduced investment in education.

At stake in this case, says NEA-AK President Bill Bjork, are both "resource development"—economic prosperity linked to a well-educated workforce—and basic civil rights. "Here we are, 50 years after *Brown* struck down school desegregation," Bjork notes, "and huge numbers of children in Alaska still don't have access to an equal education."

Jerseyans Win Pension Suit

NEW JERSEY In fiscal years 2004 and 2005, the state failed to make approximately \$1.156 billion in contributions to the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF). Six active and retired TPAF members and the **New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)** filed a lawsuit in response, prompting the state Superior Court to rule that fund members have a contractual right to payment of those contributions and that the state violated this contract. The court also found the state guilty of violating, among other things, the New Jersey Constitution and state balanced budget requirements.

NJEA pledges to "continue the fight" if the state appeals this ruling.

No-Grief Grievance Process

GEORGIA Life's not easy without a state bargaining law. After a long, exhausting lobbying campaign, the **Clayton County Education Association (CCEA)** has persuaded its school board to ratify a district policy giving education support professionals a "protected" channel—free of reprisals—for filing grievances. Clayton ESPs will now enjoy the same appeal rights as certified teachers.

For the full story on this ESP rights campaign, go to www.gae.org/KnowMag/KnowMag3_1/rally.pdf.



Teachers Know Best!

LOUISIANA The **Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE)** has made it official policy: The teaching profession "must be self-governed" by an autonomous state standards board, with both an elected teacher majority and "fully funded staff and resources to accomplish tasks."

Now LAE is working to turn policy into reality. "Teachers know best what is required to be effective in the classroom," stresses LAE President Carol Davis. "They should be given a stronger voice in determining the appropriate standards needed for licensing."

Californians Confront NCLB

CALIFORNIA State-released Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores—required by the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB)—"should not be allowed to mask the fact that many schools lack basic resources to provide students with the education they deserve," **California Teachers Association (CTA)** President Barbara E. Kerr recently told the press.

NEA's largest state affiliate doesn't mince words about NCLB. The law "focuses on the wrong priorities for our schools by wasting billions of dollars on paperwork, bureaucracy, and more standardized testing," said Kerr, "rather than giving kids what they really need to succeed: smaller class sizes, up-to-date materials, and quality teachers."

ESPs Block Privatization

ILLINOIS For more than a year, the **Dundee Association of Transportation Employees (DATE)** has bargained and campaigned locally to prevent privatization

of bus service in Community School District 300. It's paid off with a new two-year contract that keeps transportation work in-house, prevents a pay cut, and maintains insurance coverage.

These 200 drivers reached a compromise by packing school board meetings and walking bus routes to talk up what they do. Their best argument: an indisputable record as hard-working employees and members of the community.

A Win for Minnesota Voters

MINNESOTA Education Minnesota, the League of Women Voters, and other groups have blocked proposed rule changes that would have hindered voter turnout. Compromise legislation preserves one of the nation's best voter registration systems. Minnesota law allows registration on Election Day.

Strikes Begone!

WASHINGTON What a difference a year makes. Last year, **Washington Education Association (WEA)** members were forced into bitter strikes in Lake Stevens and Marysville, setting a state record in the latter dispute—50 grueling days on the picket line. But as the 2004–05 school year began, WEA settled the vast majority of its contacts, most amicably.

In most cases, school employees negotiated locally funded increases in their pay and benefits. Many local affiliates negotiated help with increasingly heavy workloads. And improved student achievement was a top issue in some districts—such as in Seattle, where the new contract focuses on eliminating the achievement gap for struggling kids.

CURTAIN

As schools devote more time to reading, writing, and results, arts educators disciplines—and their jobs—waiting in the

BY KRISTEN LOSCHERT

"It Ain't So Easy Being a Dog."

Just ask Beverley Anderson's first-graders, they should know. After all, they've spent their last few classes with Anderson, a dance teacher at the Thomas Pullen Arts Magnet School in Landover, Maryland, learning how to roll over, wag their tails, beg, and growl, all in time to music. And by this point they know the choreography by heart—well, almost anyway.

"In dance, the most important thing is how our bodies move," Anderson reminds the students as she encourages them to perform the steps, first like happy dogs, then like angry ones. For many of the children, the dance represents more of a physical release than a stage-worthy performance. But Anderson knows her students are learning important skills through rhythm and movement and building their flexibility, agility, and balance, even if they don't realize it.

"I don't think people are educated on dance education enough," she admits. "Dance is about history. We can even work science in. It gives kids the chance to be hands-on."

But dance, along with those other valued partners in self-expression—music, art, and theater—is increasingly getting short shrift in the nation's classrooms. With mounting pressure to improve test scores and demonstrate "adequate yearly progress" under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB)—all in the face of shrinking school budgets—schools nationwide have cut arts programs to devote more time to the "core" subjects that are getting measured. (Mean-

while, subjects such as social studies, long considered standard teaching fare, are taking hits, too. See page 26.)

NCLB actually includes the arts in its definition of "core academic subjects," but the law doesn't mandate testing in those areas, so unlike reading and math, they don't count toward a school's performance outcomes.

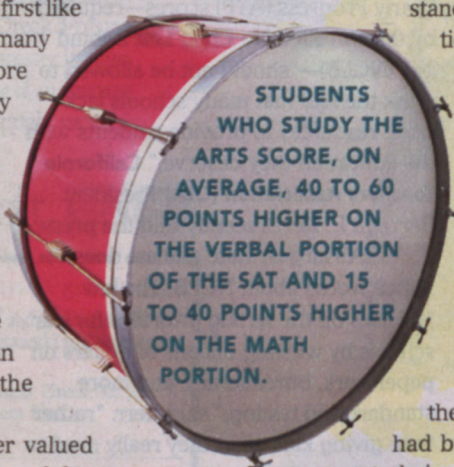
The irony? The very students NCLB is most aimed at helping—those who are low-income, minority, and academically vulnerable—are the ones studies consistently show

stand the most to gain from regular arts instruction. "In our effort to close the achievement gap in literacy and math," notes Raymond Bartlett, president of the Council on Basic Education, "we risk substituting one form of educational inequity for another, denying our most vulnerable students the kind of curriculum available to the wealthy."

Arts educators are keenly aware of the irony, but say it only underscores a trend that's been quickening for years.

"The arts have always been the first on the chopping block when school boards have had budget concerns," says Bryan Sanguinito, past chairperson of NEA's Fine Arts Caucus. "Now, NCLB has come into the picture with large portions left unfunded. Where do the arts go now?"

Sanguinito, a music teacher, knows firsthand how uncertain the career of an arts educator can be. He spent six years nurturing the strings program in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, increasing enrollment from 30 students to more than 175. But that didn't stop school officials from axing the program, citing



CALL

find their wings.

the district's stagnant budget. So, last fall Sanguinito became an itinerant music teacher in Reading and now instructs 111 fourth- through eighth-grade students in five different schools in the inner-city district.

In Belleview, Florida, tight economic times likewise led to staffing and program cuts for the arts, says Sylvia Richardson, a commercial art teacher at Belleview High School, who has maintained her program through fund-raisers and grants.

"Art teachers often are put in the position to self-sustain our programs," says Richardson, who snagged \$29,000 of grant

funds last year. "At my school everyone gets the same amount of money in their budget—about \$200. That equals a package of crayons and some paper for my kids. You're not going to have much of an art program with that."

Meanwhile, school officials in Stoneham, Massachusetts, cut all fine arts classes at the elementary and middle school levels this summer when voters failed to approve a tax increase designed to offset roughly half of the district's \$4.3 million budget shortfall. But elementary and middle school arts teachers weren't the only casualties. After 36 years of teaching, Bob Lague, the director of fine arts at Stoneham High School, found himself jobless as well.

"A great deal of what art and music teachers do is expose kids to something they otherwise might not have known, to develop talents they didn't know they had," says Lague. "I think the arts are more important now than ever, but we still have the concept that if we need to cut they are one of the first things to go."

That's what makes programs like the one at Pullen so remarkable. Even in the face of increased testing pressures, the Pullen Arts Magnet School has offered a comprehensive arts curriculum for the past 15 years, serving students from across Prince George's County, Maryland, in kindergarten through eighth grade. In fact, the program was one of only two magnet programs the county did not eliminate last year. Elementary stu-



Dance teacher **Noel Grady-Smith** (above) leads students in an American Indian serpentine dance at Mineral Springs Middle School A+ Academy.



dents receive 80 minutes of arts instruction every day and, over the course of the school year, explore each of the four major art forms: visual art, music, dance, and theater. Middle school students, meanwhile, spend an hour and a half every other day specializing in one art form they select as their "major" and pursue other arts, writing, or computer classes on their off days.

"We're in a very unique situation in this building and we realize that," says Leslie Thomas, a strings teacher. "There are a lot of arts educators who don't have what we have. They don't have the budget and the support or the time with their students that we have, and I think that's why we have the core teachers that we do."

Admittedly, programs like Pullen's remain the exception. And educators at the school realize that even strong programs like theirs won't ensure quality arts instruction for students elsewhere.

"My biggest concern is we have a wonderful program at this school, but then it's very easy for the county to say 'we have an arts magnet school therefore no other kid in the county really has to have any arts,'" says theater teacher Carol Jordan. "This is an amazing program, but if you only keep it here and

there is nothing else, you're not going to serve the kids who most need it."

Stage Fright

So, what makes the arts so consistently vulnerable? For starters, the public misunderstands and undervalues the disciplines, says Richard Deasy, director of the Arts Education Partnership (AEP), a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic, and government organizations committed to promoting arts education.

"The public believes the arts just benefit talented and gifted kids and there is a fear that pursuing a program in the arts will not get you a decent job or into college," he says. "And where you don't have strong public values for the arts, you don't have them well represented in school."

Consequently, staffing levels for arts classes often lag behind those for other subjects, which means even a minor cut can devastate a program, Deasy says.

The future of arts education hinges on changing those underlying public attitudes, he adds. Fortunately, arts advocates have made some progress on that front. A recent Phi

The Play's the Thing

Through theater, students and teachers change community opinions, one audience at a time.

For much of her teaching career at Newark Memorial High School in California, theater teacher Barbara Williams played it safe. Popular musicals, like *West Side Story* and *Cabaret*, dominated her students' performance repertoire. But in 2002, after her community endured a series of anti-gay hate crimes, Williams knew she needed to branch out. So she staged a production of *The Laramie Project*, a play about the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student in Laramie, Wyoming.

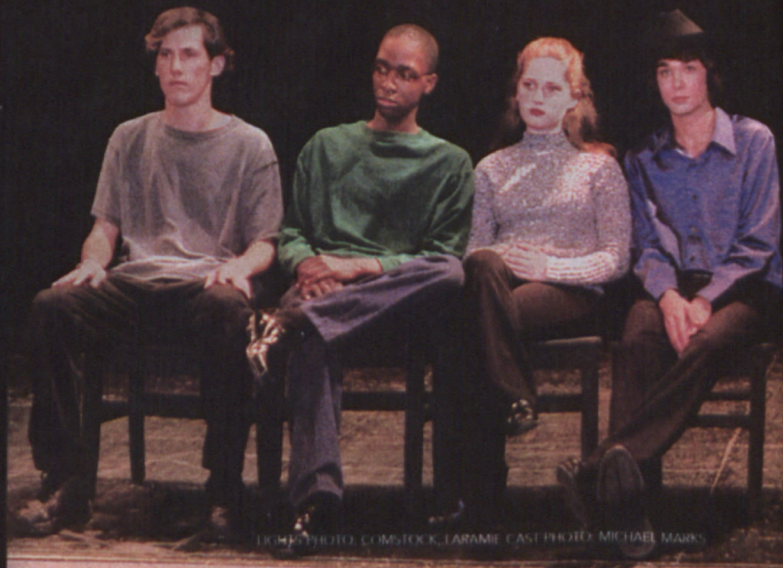
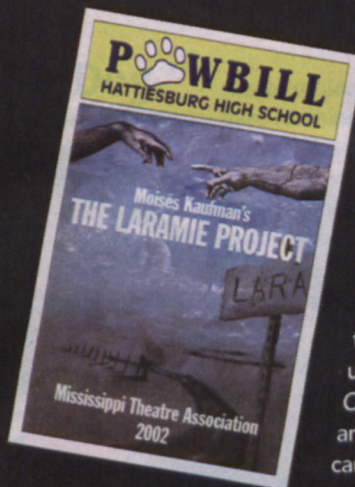
"I felt we needed to do something that had some significance on this issue," says Williams, who received a 2003 NEA Human and Civil Rights award for her work on the production. "All of us had this idea that by doing *The Laramie Project* we would correct all the ills in Newark. We thought by doing this play everyone would change their minds."

That's a sentiment theater teachers and student actors nationwide can appreciate. So many educators are using their school productions to raise awareness

about key social issues—and improve the state of affairs in their local communities along the way.

"I'm a big believer in educational theater—it should entertain, but it also has an obligation to educate," says Michael Marks, NEA Executive Committee member and a theater teacher at Hattiesburg High School in Mississippi. "Theater can be an agent of change. If we can cause people to speak with each other about topics that were once taboo, we've accomplished a lot."

The idea of addressing key social issues through theater certainly isn't new. For years, schools have used plays like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*, among others, to address topics such as the Holocaust, the treatment of the mentally ill, and racial dis-



Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on public attitudes toward the public schools found that 81 percent of Americans worry that judging a school's performance solely on English and math test scores will mean less emphasis on art, music, and other subjects. That percentage increases to 85 percent among parents of public school students. Meanwhile, a poll commissioned by Americans for the Arts, a nonprofit arts advocacy group, found that more than 90 percent of respondents agree the arts are "vital" to providing a well-rounded education to children.

But public opinion goes only so far. Schools remain strapped for cash and supporting an arts program doesn't come cheaply. Many districts simply don't allocate the necessary resources or do not know what it takes to develop quality arts programs, says Michael Blakeslee, deputy executive director for the National Association for Music Educators. In addition, finding educators to teach these classes can be



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challenging since many arts disciplines, like music, have a shortage of qualified teachers.

"Because there aren't the mandates for these programs, if you don't have enough teachers an enterprising supervisor can say 'I can solve the shortage by cutting the program' and anecdotally we hear of that happening," says Blakeslee.

And those cuts may just get deeper. In a recent study by the Council for Basic Education (CBE), a nonprofit organization that advocates for liberal arts subjects, 25 percent of principals reported decreases in the time their schools devote to the arts and 33 percent expect decreases in the next two years. (At

the same time, three-quarters of principals surveyed reported increases in the instructional time devoted to reading, writing, and math.) The cuts have hit poor minority students the hardest—36 percent of principals in schools with large percentages of minority students reported reduced instructional time for the arts, while 42 percent anticipate future decreases. And

crimination, says Michael Peitz, executive director of the Educational Theatre Association (ETA).

What has changed, though, are the topics students are tackling. Through plays like *The Inner Circle*, *Freedom Summer*, and *The Guys* students at Hattiesburg High School have addressed AIDS, the struggle of local civil rights activists, and the September 11 terrorist attacks. Meanwhile, productions of *The Laramie Project* and *Bang Bang You're Dead*, a play inspired by the school shootings of the 1990s, are on the rise, according to ETA.

But school leaders, audience members, and the general public aren't always interested in the progressive messages these plays offer. Many question whether such works are even "appropriate" material for teen actors. During Newark High's production of *Laramie*, for instance, students had to enter the school through police barriers because protesters

picketed the play. And Williams received plenty of calls from other educators seeking advice when their own districts refused to let them perform the show. Even *The Crucible*, which topped ETA's list of most-produced high school plays during the 2002–03 school year, has raised a few eyebrows for dealing with witchcraft.

"There are times when we think students aren't ready to handle these issues and, in some ways, doesn't that deny the reality of the world the students live in, since they deal with those issues every day?" Peitz asks. "In all of these [works], the teachers are looking for plays that challenge their students' minds, as well as those of their audience."

And it works. During their production of *Freedom Summer*, students at Hattiesburg High School met with actual members of the historic 1964 campaign to register Black voters, many of whom had been beaten or jailed for their efforts.

"It opened [the students'] eyes to the struggle and they had a better appreciation for where they are today as a result of what these men and women did in the 1960s," says Raphael Waldrop, forensics coach in the Hattiesburg theater department.

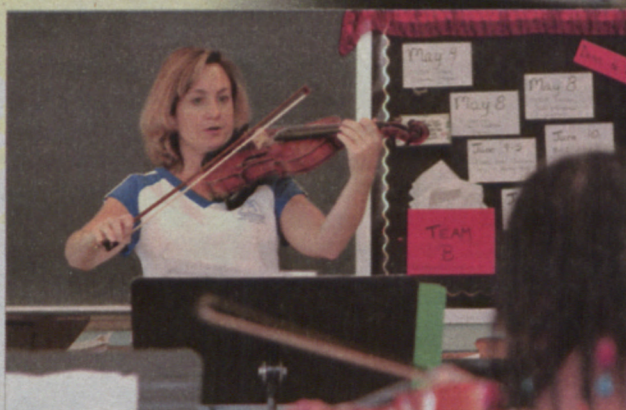
Meanwhile, after Williams' students performed *The Laramie Project* they organized a group to speak out against hate crimes and lobbied district officials to modify the city code to include protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals.

"*Laramie* turned out to be something that is still with me and probably always will be," says Williams, who retired this summer. "All the kids in the show felt they had made a difference and got the community to sit up and take notice and make some changes. And it's created this incredible desire to keep doing it."



The cast of *The Laramie Project* at Hattiesburg High School

CURTAIN CALL



Leslie Thomas (left) oversees the strings program at the Pullen Arts Magnet School. Students also can study band (above) and vocal music.

more than twice as many principals from high-minority schools than low-minority schools expect the time will decrease greatly.

"We're seeing that low-income minority students are being denied the liberal arts curriculum that their more privileged counterparts receive as a matter of course," says Raymond Bartlett of CBE. Yet research shows such students have the most to gain from regular arts instruction.

According to AEP's report *Champions of Change*, a compilation of studies on the impact of arts on learning, students who participate in the arts outperform those who don't on virtually every measure. Researchers found that "sustained learning" in music and theater correlate to greater success in math and reading, and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds see the greatest benefits. In fact, "learning in and through the arts can help 'level the playing field' for youngsters from disadvantaged circumstances," the researchers contend.

For instance, a study of high-poverty schools in Chicago found that schools using an arts-integrated curriculum through the Chicago Arts Education Partnerships in Education (CAPE) program saw greater improvement in students'

reading and math performance than schools not involved in the program. CAPE schools also made larger gains in closing the achievement gap between high- and low-income students.

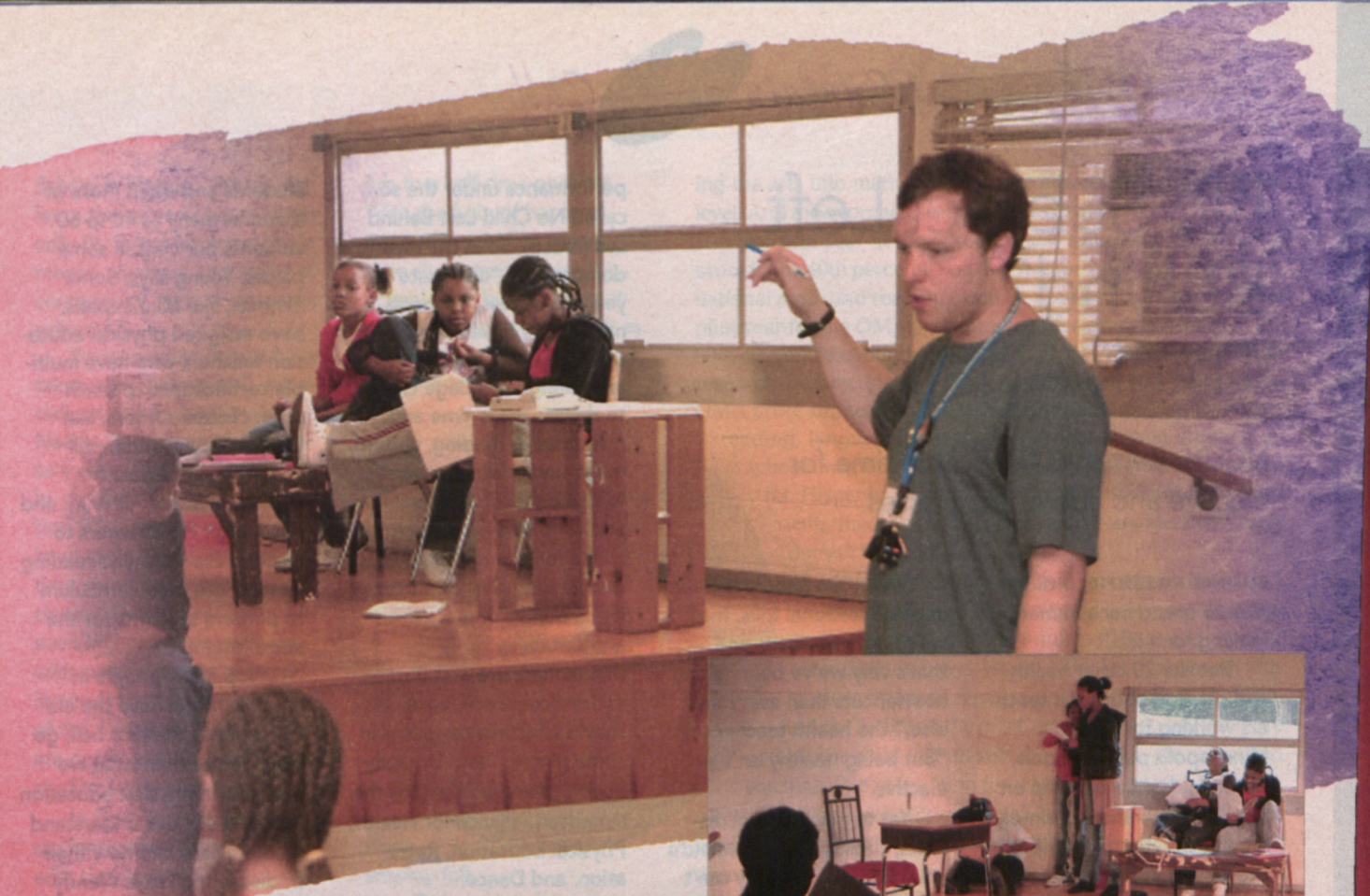
Similarly, a study of after-school programs for disadvantaged youth found that students engaged in the arts achieved more academically and personally than similar students not involved in after-school activities. The arts students outperformed peers who participated in sports, community involvement, and academic after-school programs as well.

"All students benefit intellectually, personally, and socially from quality arts education," says Deasy. "But students of special needs—English-language learners, special education, those who may be failing in school—those who are often the lowest performing on standard measures of achievement, are immensely benefited from the opportunity to engage in quality arts experiences and instruction."

Educators at Peter Howell Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, know he's right.

Say OM-A

The first thing that strikes visitors when they walk into Howell Elementary School is the music—classical music wafting through the halls piped over speakers throughout the building. And of course they can't miss the artwork. Prints honoring the works of the great masters, from Renoir to Monet, hang alongside oil paintings and charcoal sketches crafted by aspiring first-grade Picassos. Meanwhile, in their classrooms, teachers opt for incandescent lamps instead of



Theater teacher **Jeff Peck** directs his middle school students during an introductory drama class at the Pullen Arts Magnet School.



overhead fluorescent lighting to give their learning spaces a warm, homey feeling. It all creates a “kinder, gentler” atmosphere at the school, teachers say, and they have the OMA program to thank for it.

OMA stands for Opening Minds Through the Arts—an innovative approach to learning that integrates arts lessons into all aspects of instruction. Twice a week music specialists from the University of Arizona teach instrumental music and composition to students, while reinforcing key learning concepts presented by the classroom teachers. For instance, kindergartners review basic counting and numerical patterns by exploring patterns in music with a visiting woodwind trio or string quartet. Meanwhile, first-graders learn about the structure of a story and build their language skills by writing and scoring their own operas.

“You would think that losing half an hour every day out of your teaching time is a lot to give up,” says Eve Long, who teaches a combined kindergarten and first-grade class. “It’s not really giving it up, though. It’s really enhancing what I’m doing. It’s making my teaching easier because the kids are so willing to jump onto these things.”

In addition to working with the visiting musicians, teachers meet in grade level teams for an hour each week to strategize on lesson topics and instruc-

tional approaches. Then they collaborate with the school music and art specialists, individually and at monthly joint meetings, on ways to use music and visual art to accomplish their learning goals. Fifth-graders studying landforms in science class may make clay models or other visual representations of what they are studying. At the same time, the music specialist reinforces student literacy by reviewing classroom literature during his music lessons and helping students craft original songs based on a character’s emotions or a key plot element.

Howell is not without challenges, of course. The school, which serves 400 predominantly Hispanic and African-American students, meets almost every condition for an “at-risk” population.

About 80 percent of students receive a free or reduced-price lunch and half are English-language learners. Many students live in single-parent households, while others live in the local homeless or domestic victims’ shelter or one of two group homes for orphans. Most arrive at Howell’s front door with limited vocabularies and under-developed auditory skills—two traits Jan Vesely, the school’s principal, thought she could improve by using the arts. So, five years ago she and the school’s music specialist developed OMA as a way to enhance student achievement by integrat-

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No Subject Left Behind? Think Again.

NCLB's demands leave little time for elective and liberal arts classes.

BONNIE ROSENFELD didn't plan to spend her summer looking for a job.

But like 20 other health and physical education teachers working for the Minneapolis public schools, Rosenfield got a pink slip on July 2. Health and P.E. simply aren't educational priorities in the district, Rosenfield says, because they aren't part of the "testing standard."

"I feel like people look at us as educational frills, that we're not necessary, and that's why we've been taking heavier cuts than everyone else," the health teacher says. "But being healthy isn't an elective."

Yet to many school districts, classes like Rosenfield's are luxuries, ones they can't afford when such classes don't count toward a school's

performance under the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB). So in the race to demonstrate "adequate yearly progress," schools nationwide have scaled back on P.E., health, social studies, and foreign language classes to devote more time and resources to reading, writing, math, and science—courses tested under the federal law and used to evaluate schools.

"Even though there is no decree that says 'don't teach these things,' if there is no accountability for it, the things there are accountability for take precedence, so that is affecting programs in some places," says Dr. Judy Young, vice president for the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

For health and P.E. teachers that means less time with

students and often more of them, as many as 40 to 60 students per class in some places, Young says. Some districts, like Minneapolis, have assigned physical education teachers who have multiple certifications to teach other classes. Others, like Cooper City, Florida, pull students out of class for additional academic work and encourage P.E. teachers to incorporate math and reading lessons into their curriculum to prepare students for the state tests.

"Too many people in administration have the old concepts of 'here's a ball, go play,' rather than what we really do in physical education today—help kids understand who they are and how their bodies work," says Wendy Wood, a physical education teacher at Pioneer Middle



Physical education teacher **Wendy Wood** helps her students understand the importance of personal fitness.

School in Florida. "[Students] learn the value of being physically fit. It also improves their mental alertness and ability to concentrate on their academic subjects."

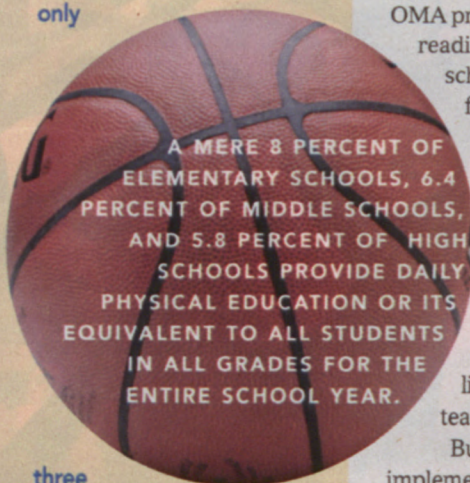
Social studies classes have taken a beating as well, especially at the elementary level. Nearly 30 percent of elementary school principals surveyed by the Council for Basic Education (CBE) say their schools have reduced the amount of time spent on social studies classes. The percentage is even higher among schools with large numbers of minority students, where nearly half of the principals report moderate or large decreases in social studies instruction.

In Florida, for instance, students now can graduate with six fewer credits, which means many could complete their high school careers without taking a single social studies course, says Evelyn Butts, a world history teacher at Tampa Bay Technical High School. Her school, which serves 2,000 students, has half as many social studies teachers as English teachers, Butts says. The social studies educators also receive less professional development and fewer resources than their English, math, and science colleagues.

"The No Child Left Behind act actually diminishes the need for social studies," she says. "Because the emphasis is on English and math, and to a certain degree science, you have to say that is important because that is what's being tested."

Foreign language teachers, like Kay Miller in Wichita, Kansas, also are feeling the fall-out from NCLB as school officials reallocate their resources. Even though Miller had 105 students registered for her French classes at Heights High School last year, the district downgraded her

job to a half-time position. With the help of her local Association, Miller got the full-time slot reinstated for this school year, but teachers at other area schools weren't as fortunate. Of the district's 11 high schools, only



three employ full-time German teachers, she says, and several reduced their French teachers to part-time employees.

The situation is especially critical for minority students. In the CBE survey, 23 percent of principals in high-minority schools have reduced the time they devote to foreign languages, while 29 percent expect future decreases. At the same time, foreign languages continue to lag at the elementary level, with only one-third of elementary schools offering any instruction.

"What's important here is that all subjects be adequately funded and earmarked as core subjects so they remain in the curriculum and part of what youngsters experience," says Jesus Garcia, president of the National Council for the Social Studies. "We're very concerned our children are leaving our schools having a rather distorted and unbalanced curriculum presented to them that will result in kids who can perform well on tests, but who know very little about other subject areas."

ing the arts into math and language arts lessons at each grade level. And the approach seems to be working.

Her first year at the school, Vesely's students struggled to score in the 40th percentile on the Stanford Achievement Test, a national math and reading exam. A year later, at the end of the pilot year for the OMA program, the first-graders scored in the 80th percentile. An independent study by WestEd, a nonprofit research agency, found similar results: after two years in the OMA program, second-grade students had significantly higher reading, language, and math test scores than students in schools without OMA. Additionally, the achievement gap for Hispanic students narrowed considerably for students involved in the program. Coincidence? Vesely doesn't think so.

"We had to figure out how we connect things in a meaningful manner so we could buy more time and make the time we do have more efficient and effective with the kids," says Vesely. "The arts help reach kids in more intimate areas to open them up to learning. And the feeling is the more angles we can hit, the more likely the child will master the concepts. We're not just teaching. We're teaching for learning—and it's working."

But OMA's impact goes well beyond test scores. Since implementing the program, student behavior problems have decreased, attendance has improved, and students appear more focused and ready to learn, teachers say. The program provides an additional avenue for students learning English as well.

"I've had children from China or Mexico who've come in with no English and of course it's scary for them," says Christina Diaz, a kindergarten and first-grade teacher. "But as we do our songs, you see their body language relax, and I believe they learn their English through music first. They are getting the formation of our language and it connects them to the other children."

Last year, for instance, Diaz had a student from China who couldn't speak a word of English at the beginning of the school year. By November, the student had the leading role in the school opera and had developed excellent English skills, she says.

"Initially, many teachers felt [the OMA program] was just one more thing we had to do," Diaz admits. "But the key is integration. Teachers look for more creative ways to teach. And over the years we've taken for granted that it really helps the children learn better."

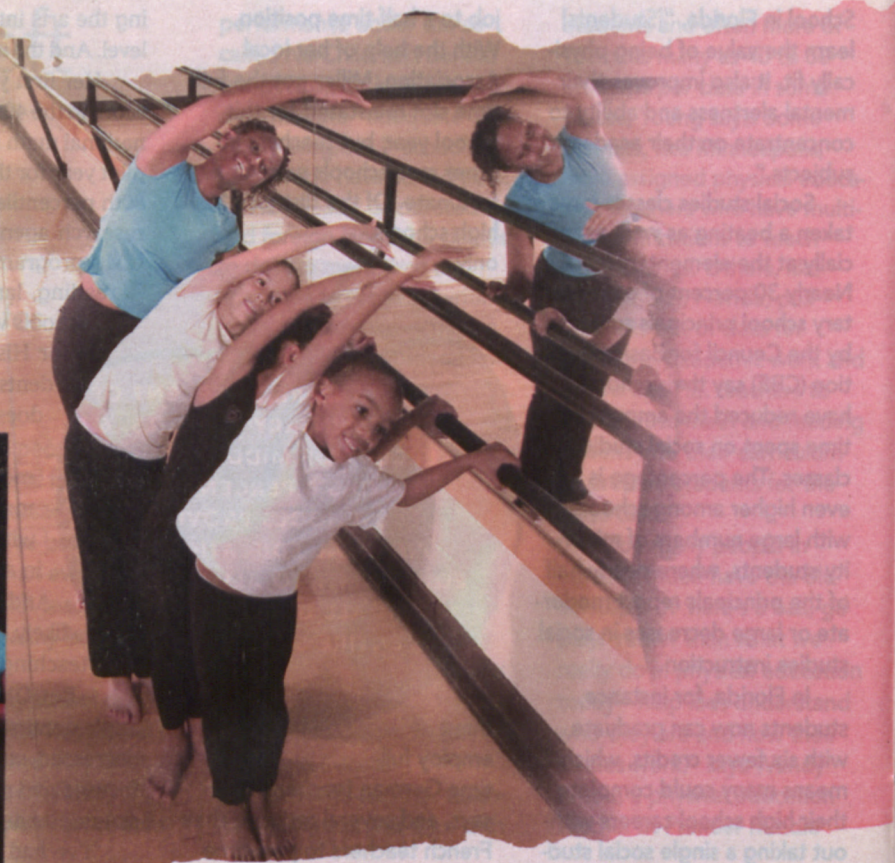
Teachers at North Carolina's Mineral Springs Middle School A+ Academy feel the same way.

Arts Get an A+

Integrating the arts is nothing new for this Winston-Salem middle school, which, like Howell, serves an at-risk population of predominantly poor minority children. Since 1995, the school has participated in the A+ Schools Program, an instructional approach that encourages classroom teachers to collaborate with arts specialists to enhance their curriculum from multiple perspectives. Students also receive daily instruction in drama, dance, visual art, or vocal or instrumental music, depending on the discipline they choose to study.

The program, now based at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, started with 25 pilot schools statewide, including Mineral Springs. Today, more than 40 schools in North Carolina have adopted the approach, many as part of their school

Curtain Call



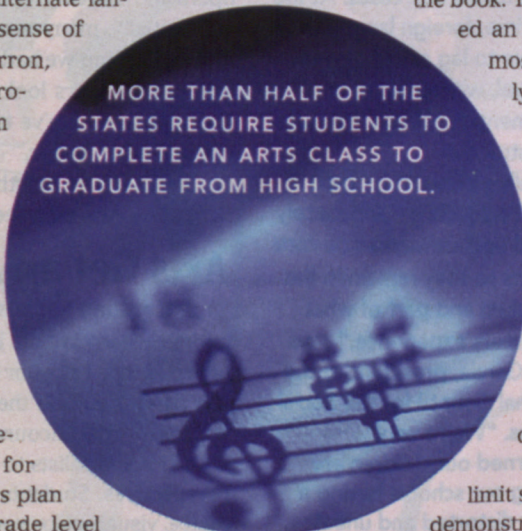
Dance teacher **Beverley Anderson** leads Pullen students through some basic dance moves (above) and observes a final dress rehearsal (left).

improvement plans to increase student achievement. During the past two years, schools in Oklahoma and Arkansas have implemented the program as well.

"The arts provide children with alternate languages out of which they can make sense of what's going on," says Vincent Marron, executive director of the A+ Schools Program. "One of the things the program does is release the creativity of the teachers and encourage them to take an overall view of their role as leaders in a school. It provides the teachers and students with more entry points to learning than a traditional approach to the curriculum would allow."

Most importantly, each school can customize the program to suit its specific needs. At Mineral Springs, for instance, academic and arts educators plan two thematic units each year per grade level that incorporate lessons in all disciplines—including the arts. The approach appeals to students' different learning styles, provides multiple opportunities for students to master content, and helps students see the connections between each subject.

MORE THAN HALF OF THE STATES REQUIRE STUDENTS TO COMPLETE AN ARTS CLASS TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.



Last year, for example, the eighth-grade team developed a comprehensive lesson around the Great Dismal Swamp in North Carolina. Students started by reading *The Weirdo*, a book set in the swamp, in their English classes and wrote essays from the perspectives of different characters in the book. Then a field trip to the swamp provided

an opportunity for students to collect moss, soil, and insect samples they analyzed for science class. The project culminated with students creating original artwork inspired by their trip.

"No student has only one set of talents or skills," says Noel Grady-Smith, a dance teacher and the school's A+ program coordinator last year. "If we only address that one set of skills, specifically the mathematical/logical and the verbal/linguistic, we miss a whole range of expertise the student has."

With that in mind, teachers don't limit students to pencil-and-paper tests to demonstrate the knowledge they have mastered. Eighth-graders studying the Harlem Renaissance, for example, complete a research paper for their language arts class; a visual presentation, such as a Microsoft PowerPoint display, poster, or dramatic interpretation, for social studies; and an interpretative dance for Grady-Smith.



Pullen art teacher **Sheila Hyman** shows students how to create an animal mask (left and above) and prepares for the school's annual art show (top).

The approach lets students express themselves through their work, she says; and, consequently, they become more invested in their own learning.

"Children can express and experience learning much more fully when they have an artistic medium to work through," Grady-Smith says. "It helps them get into deeper levels of thinking so they are applying knowledge and abstracting. They have to be able to do that to turn what they have learned into art."

The Same Old Song

Yet, even model programs like those at Mineral Springs, Howell Elementary, and the Pullen Arts Magnet, aren't immune to the fiscal crunch. Two years ago, the North Carolina state legislature cut all state funding for the A+ program and schools now must foot the entire bill for the staff training necessary to implement the program. As a result, fewer rural and lower-income schools have signed up in recent years, Marron says. (Although, Marron hopes the program will resurface in next year's state budget.)

And when Howell Elementary School wanted to add visual arts to the OMA program last year, Vesely had to resort to tax credits and other financial donations to the school to pay the teacher's salary. As a result, the art teacher works only part time.

Meanwhile, educators at the Pullen Arts Magnet in Maryland fund the school's drama and dance productions through ticket sales, since the county does not provide any money for the events. The school also organized a nonprofit community support group to raise money to upgrade the arts facilities and hopes to build a new creative and performing arts center on the school grounds next year.

Such penny pinching and dollar stretching come with the territory, arts educators say. Nonetheless, they remain hopeful that sooner or later those outside of their disciplines will understand and value their subjects as much as they do.

"Arts educators should hold on and weather the storm," says Jeff Peck, a theater teacher at Pullen. "Because in the long run people will see that all arts programs are vitally important and they need to be maintained and continued because they will ensure that we have better students." **nea**

Time to Take Center Stage

What does it take to build a strong school arts program and how can you safeguard yours from the budget axe? Find out more in the special online bonus edition of the November NEA Today cover story. Here you'll find:

RESOURCES for sustaining and building your school's arts program
RESEARCH about the academic and social benefits students receive from regular arts instruction

INFORMATION from education associations and nonprofit groups on the front lines of arts advocacy

To access our online extras, visit www.nea.org/neatodayextra and click on from there.



Vote 'Em Out!

Educators and parents in a small Wisconsin town decide: enough is enough.

In the end, it almost looked easy: new school board members elected by two-to-one margins, a contract with significant raises, a new superintendent on the way, staff morale soaring.

But the breakthrough followed years of frustration and

mation is Nekoosa, Wisconsin, population 2,500.

For six years, the town had a superintendent who, as community leader Randy Moody says politely, was "not a people person."

"He came in

it, he would let you speak."

One of the lowest points was the dismissal of custodian Duane Exner, founder of the Nekoosa Educational Support Personnel Association, on false charges that he had taken a two-hour lunch break and lied about it on his timesheet.

Supported by fellow educators and union lawyers, Exner fought for 14 months and won

recall the majority of the board. "This is a good community," says Thomasgard. "Parents support their kids."

Joslin and Moody became leaders in the recall campaign. Moody was president of a citizens group that had tried to get the board to change course. He has five daughters, all students or former students in the schools, and they had told him about the sad state of morale in school.

As it turned out, many other citizens of

Nekoosa knew about the problem and were ready to act. Fourteen hundred—more than half of the town—signed the recall petition.

It was 10 degrees outside when voters trooped to the polls for the election, but the results warmed the hearts of educators and parents:

a new board majority. The superintendent quickly resigned.

Thomasgard says the new board members are independent, and he doesn't expect the union will agree with them on everything. But their attitude is completely different. A new contract was negotiated with good raises. There's a feeling of respect for frontline educators: "They're coming to us for ideas!" says Joslin.

And Randy Moody is happy with what he hears from his daughters: "The teachers aren't looking over their shoulders, worrying about losing their jobs," he says. "Now they can concentrate on teaching."

—ALAIN JEHLIN



Nekoosa educators appealed to the community to help them counter a hostile administration—and the community came through.

pain—the stonewalling, the attempted firing of a union leader, the eroding pay capped by an imposed contract in which nearly 40 percent of teachers actually had to give money back.

"In 30 years of teaching, that was about as bleak a time as I've ever had," recalls geography teacher and Nekoosa Teachers' Association activist Leo Thomasgard. "What a difference a year makes."

The scene of this transfor-

with a gun-slinger attitude," says science teacher Jon Joslin. Educators were subjected to dictatorial treatment, salaries slid relative to nearby communities, staff members fled.

But the school board supported the superintendent and fended off any criticism. Just to speak before the board, explains Moody, "you had to submit a written request to the superintendent eight days in advance, and then if he felt like



complete vindication. On his first day back, the staff came out to greet him at the door.

Nekoosa educators cracked the wall again when they helped a pro-educator candidate win election to the school board. But then the board majority shut him out of important decisions.

With new contract negotiations coming up and more staff bailing out of Nekoosa, those who remained wondered whether things would ever change. But desperation can inspire. As a last resort, they decided on a petition drive to

A strong America begins in the classroom.

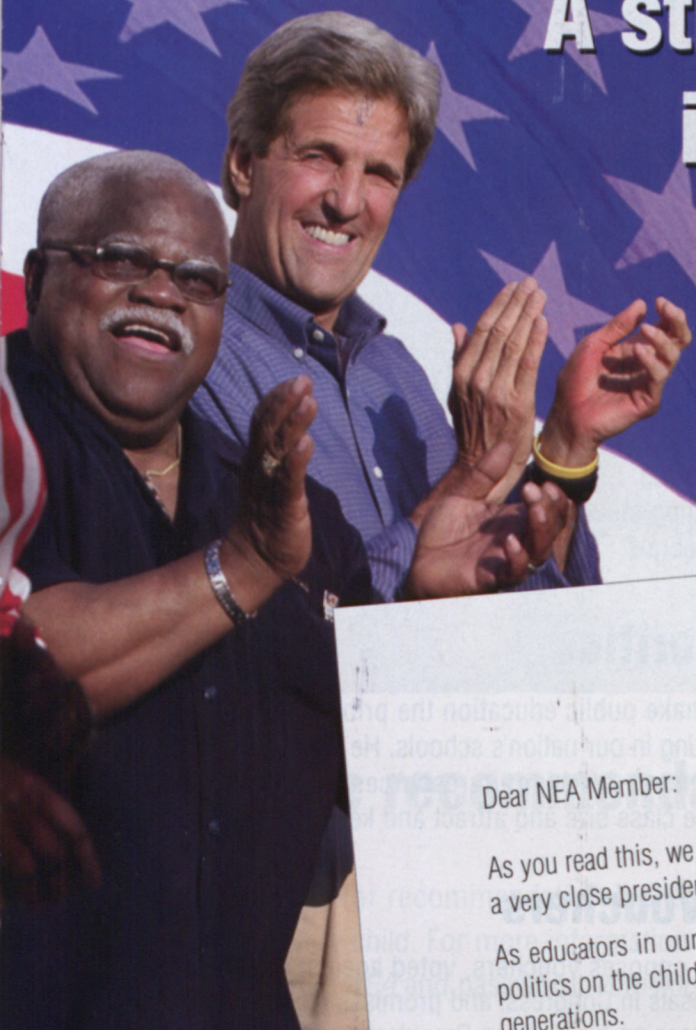


Photo provided by:
Scott Shaw/NEA



Dear NEA Member:

As you read this, we are just a few days away from a hard-fought and what is sure to be a very close presidential election.

As educators in our public schools, we have a special understanding of the impact of politics on the children we serve, and a unique perspective on our responsibility to future generations.

Both George W. Bush and John Kerry have long records on education and a genuine commitment to improving our schools. They differ in their views on many issues important to us, and you can compare where the candidates stand for yourself.

We've provided the information in this insert to let you know about the candidates and our recommendation process. Earning the recommendation of the NEA is not easy; we only support candidates who support our goals to make public schools great for every child.

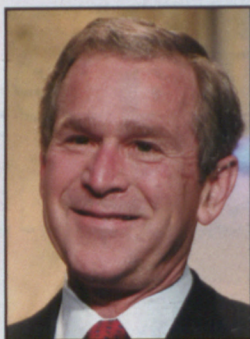
After a careful examination of the candidates' records and positions on the issues, the NEA believes that John Kerry is the best choice to strengthen and protect public education and stand up for NEA members.

I hope you find this information useful in making an informed choice, and above all I hope you go to the polls and vote, whomever you decide to support.

On November 2, we need to elect a president committed to making public schools great for every child. And to do that, the voices of educators across the country must be heard. So please vote November 2 and bring your colleagues and family members along.

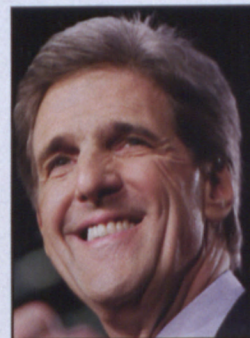
Reg Weaver

President,
National Education Association



George W. Bush

Consider Compare Contrast Choose



John Kerry

Respect for Public Education and Educators

His No Child Left Behind law leaves decisions to Washington, D.C., bureaucrats. The Bush plan continues to use a cumulative score of a single test to determine the overall success of a school.¹

Wants to make every classroom a center for learning, not testing. Supports placing the responsibility for educating students in the hands of teachers — not bureaucrats.²

Education Priorities

Cut nearly \$14 billion from special education, teacher training, and after-school programs — forcing a greater financial burden on local districts.³

Will make public education the priority it should be by investing in our nation's schools. He will fully fund special education — freeing up resources at the local level to reduce class size and attract and keep the best teachers.⁴

Private School Vouchers

Bush has included federal voucher programs in every budget since becoming President. He sponsored and signed into law the nation's first ever federally funded voucher program.⁵

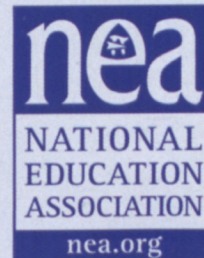
Kerry opposes vouchers, voted against Bush's voucher proposals in Congress, and promises to veto any voucher bill crossing his desk as President.⁶

Health Care

Has not had a single major initiative to cut the cost of health care or cover the uninsured.⁷

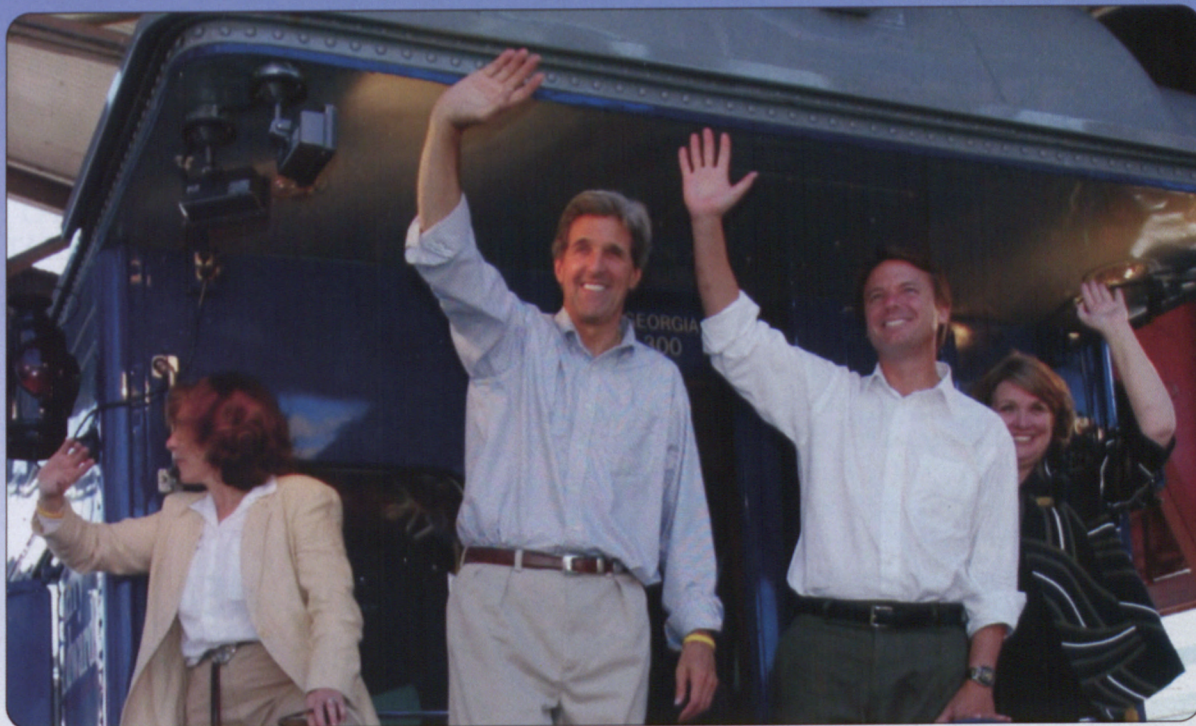
Would repeal the Bush tax cuts for those making more than \$200,000 a year to provide \$1,000 of premium relief, guarantee coverage for every child, and cover 27 million Americans without insurance.⁸

This is why the NEA recommends John Kerry for President



*Great Public Schools
for Every Child*

Check the record for yourself: **1.** No Child Left Behind Act 1/8/02. **2.** Congressional Record, Senate Vote 334, 9/10/03; Senate Vote 35, 3/10/04. **3.** Fiscal Year 2005 Budget, 2/2/04; Congressional Record, S 939, 4/29/03; HR 3802, 2/11/04. **4.** www.JohnKerry.com; Congressional Record, Senate Vote 170, 6/30/00; Senate Vote 82, 4/5/01; Senate Vote 60, 3/21/03. **5.** Bush Administration FY 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 Budgets. **6.** NEA Candidate Interview, 9/24/03, Senate Vote 89, 5/23/97. Congressional Record, Senate Vote 260, 9/30/97. Senate Vote 291, 11/4/97. Senate Vote 360, 11/10/99. Senate Vote 179, 6/12/01. **7.** NEA analysis of the Bush Administration's health care record. **8.** www.JohnKerry.com.



Earning the recommendation of the NEA is not easy.

The primary criterion for recommendation is that the candidate shares our commitment to making public schools great for every child. For more information on NEA's recommendation process, visit www.nea.org/vote. Log in with username: *NEA* and password: *vote4kids*.

Our Choice: John Kerry and John Edwards

- Kerry and Edwards will fix and fund the so-called No Child Left Behind law.
- Kerry and Edwards understand that one-size-fits-all tests do not improve learning.
- Kerry and Edwards will invest in the things children need — quality teachers, smaller class sizes, more parental involvement, pre-kindergarten programs, and up-to-date classroom materials.
- Kerry and Edwards will focus on helping — not punishing — students, teachers, and schools.

The right priorities, respect for educators

- Kerry and Edwards understand that educators know what works in a classroom, and they will listen to teachers and others who work in schools.
- Kerry and Edwards will boost parental involvement and invest in greater computer access for low-income families.
- Kerry and Edwards will expand health care to all children and establish universal preschool to make sure all children have a strong start.
- Kerry and Edwards will cut the cost of medical coverage — saving families thousands in out-of-pocket expenses.



How **YOU** can get active and make a difference:

nea

NATIONAL
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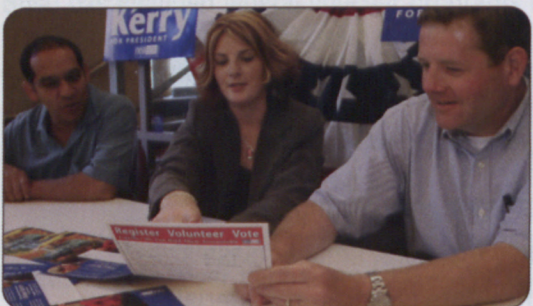
Great Public Schools
for Every Child



Linda Gingras, ESP from Clark County, Nevada, talks to colleagues about the upcoming election.
Photo provided by John Outcalt — NEA



Elizabeth Edwards talks with Michigan Education Association members.
Photo provided by Dennis Keenon — MEA



NEA Student Program Chair Mandy Plucker discusses how to talk to fellow student members about the election. *Photo provided by Sandy Schaeffer*



Ohio Education Association members show their support at an educator reception prior to a Kerry/Edwards rally in Springfield, Ohio.
Photo provided by Michele Prater — OEA

Vote

Please vote on November 2 and bring your colleagues and family members.

Contribute to The NEA Fund for Children & Public Education

NEA's recommended candidates need our dollars to run for office and support your priority issues in Washington, D.C. Only voluntary contributions from NEA members can be used. Contribute online at our secure Web site: www.neafund.org.

Volunteer

Just a few moments of your time can make a big difference in electing candidates who will make public schools great for every child. Visit our password protected Web site at www.nea.org/vote. Log in with username: *NEA* and password: *vote4kids*. Sign up to volunteer, and you'll receive more information.

For more information

Need to register to vote? Want more information about the candidates or how you can help? Visit www.nea.org/vote. Log in with username: *NEA* and password: *vote4kids*.

NEA STUDENT PROGRAM

THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR FUTURE TEACHERS

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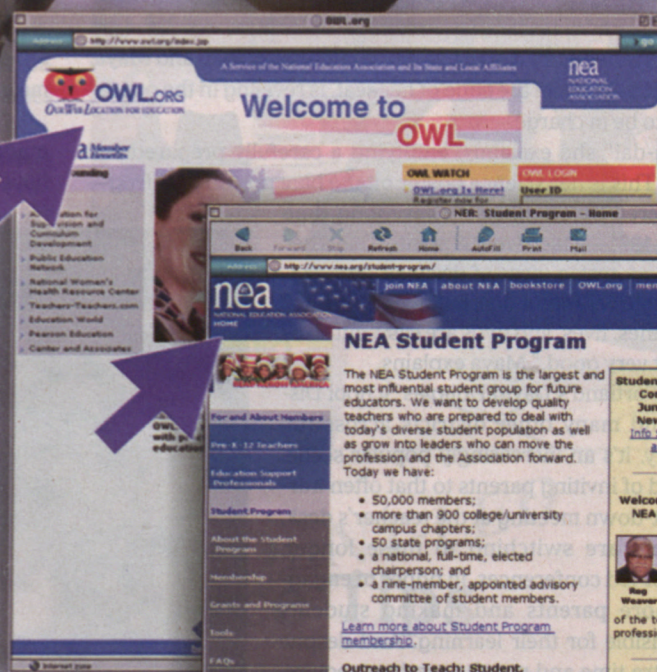


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Great Public Schools for Every Child

In a twist on the traditional parent-teacher conference, teachers are inviting somebody else to run the show: their students.

Turning the Tables

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

"**S**hall we sit down?" asks 9-year-old Maya Baker-Freid, pointing her mother to a child-sized chair in a third-grade classroom at Cherry Park Elementary in Portland, Oregon. Deborah Baker folds her knees under the wood-topped desk and, as Maya's teacher Stephanie Myrhe looks on, waits to hear what her daughter has to say.

This is definitely not the parent conference of old, and Maya, perched eagerly on the edge of her seat, is reveling in the opportunity to be in charge.

"Ta-da!" she exclaims, emptying a carefully prepared red folder. This is her science poster on the blue poison dart frog—discovered by scientists "a very long time ago" in 1971—which won 98 points. This is her final math test, a mess of decimals and division, which earned a depressing 87 percent.

"Nines, fives, and twos are easy, but sixes are not very good," Maya explains.

In Portland's David Douglas School District and many other districts across the country, it's an increasingly popular scene. Instead of inviting parents to that often hurried sit-down meeting at the teacher's desk, teachers are switching to these longer, student-led conferences, in hopes of engaging more parents and making students responsible for their learning. And despite the extra time and pay the sessions require, many educators still give them a thumbs-up.

An Iowa State University (ISU) study four years ago found that of 1,500 schools surveyed, some 24 percent of fifth graders were leading conferences, said Donald Hackmann, an ISU associate professor of educational administration. In a more recent study of 98 "highly successful middle schools," Hackmann found nearly 40 percent turned to students to explain their own learning.

"There are a few nice advantages," Hackmann says.

First, teachers say, parents come to these conferences. And then, with everybody at the same table, more gets done. Kids set specific goals with their parents, which hopefully lead to increased academic performance, and teachers avoid the usual he-said, she-said conflicts.

'TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT!'

Lori Ellis, an Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, first-grade teacher, is a pioneer in student-led conferences. Back when most teachers were still meeting parents for 10 minutes in the cafeteria, she took out trays of chocolate-chip cookies and soft drinks and asked her kids to host the get-together.

Her students all begin their conference the same way. "Today I'm going to tell you all about my learning and I want you to ask me questions along the way. Okay, Mom and Dad?"

"I'm going to show you the book I'm reading during my guided reading group and read you my favorite page....Do you have any questions?"



Putting the students in charge: Students at Cherry Park Elementary take ownership of their grades at a new type of parent conference.

Simple enough, but Ellis put a lot of work into developing scripts and checklists for her students, plus conference-related lesson plans. Although she was able to combine most of her work for her master's degree classes, few teachers have the spare time to get started, she acknowledges.

Still, her efforts were rewarded when she surveyed Green-

land School parents a few years ago. While 9 percent preferred the traditional conference, 49 percent said they liked the new style and 42 percent wanted both—a traditional conference in the fall and a student presentation in the spring.

For her own part, Ellis prefers the spring. While it's nice to meet parents one-on-one, their questions usually can be answered in notes, e-mails, or calls. Plus, the student-led meetings are much more successful at getting parents through the door.

"I have had fall conferences where parents don't show up," Ellis said. "(In the spring), the kids would never let them forget—it's like tonight's the night!"

At their young age, Ellis' first-graders can't do much in the way of self-analysis. The student-led conferences in her classroom are more celebrations than critiques. But by third grade, students can identify their specific weaknesses and parents should be able to help them.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

"There's going to be a lot of math in fourth grade," Cherry Park third-grader Ariana Hunter tells her mother, as they look over a few funky figures in her folder. (Math, unlike art or lunch, is not her favorite.) "Maybe it's something to work on this summer," offers her mother, Sandra Reed.

By middle school, students should be actively engaged in setting goals, says Laura Hayden, an integrated computer studies teacher in Derby, Kansas.

Every Friday, her kids describe the most important thing they learned that week and set a new weekly goal. They also evaluate themselves on "employability" skills—were they punctual? Did they follow directions? Get along with their "co-workers?"

Then, during the conference with their parents, they're able to explain in detail what they did to get an A or what they didn't do to get a D, and set well-defined goals, she says. "Not just a letter grade—but specific goals like 'I'm going to look at my notes every night,'" Hayden says. "I tell them, 'If you go the cheap way out, you'll get a cheap grade.'"

Hayden doesn't have fond memories of the old conferences, which she likens to moving cattle. "When we were in the cafeteria, people would wait 20 minutes for me to say, 'Here's your child's grade. It's nice to meet you.'" But the new style can really affect a student's performance, she says, when kids realize they're the ones responsible for their grades. "I want them to think about their learning....It's not my grade, it's theirs."

NO LIES, NOW

Compared to Ellis and Hayden, math teacher Cris Orff of Noble High School in North Berwick, Maine, is a relative newcomer on the scene. He ceded control of parent conferences four years ago, at about the same time that he and some colleagues decided to try a team approach to teaching.

High school students obsess about a lot of things—cell phones and school dances—but not necessarily their class work. Freshmen, he says, laughing, "tend to be detached from reality....Our goal was to tie them to reality and get them thinking again."

But, like his colleagues from all over the country, Orff discovered other benefits. "All of a sudden, they're sitting here with you and their parents. They can't say, 'Oh, it's the teacher's fault or it's my parents' fault,'" he says. "They're there between a rock and a hard place, and they have to be honest."

But Orff noted that parents do need a little time to adjust. "They keep looking at you, keep asking you for direction. You have to redirect it to the students," he says.

DEMAND COMPENSATION

Districts also need time to catch up. When Wisconsin's Ellis first prepared for student-led conferences, she wasn't compensated for the extra time. A few years later, it became part of the contract, and all her colleagues jumped on board.

Likewise, Orff began voluntarily, knowing each 30-minute conference would eat up more time. But this year, it became an issue at the bargaining table and now all Noble High teachers will qualify for compensatory time off, he said.

Students, on the other hand, adapt quickly. At Portland's Cherry Park, Maya revels in her student-led conference. The sneaky sixes aside, the third-grader's reading and writing skills are very strong, says her teacher, Stephanie Myrhe.

"Very well-presented, ma'am," her mother says.

Maya bows. **nea**



STUDENT-LED Conference Tips

PREPARE STUDENTS. Explain the process. Model their role. Ask them to practice introducing their parents to you.

PREPARE PARENTS. Invite them with a letter that emphasizes that their child needs to come. Let them know what to expect.

PREPARE YOURSELF. Have a good handle on how your students are doing. Which students might need more support?

PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT. Consider light music in the background, cookies, and messages on boards.

HAVE WORK FOR STUDENTS to share. A Microsoft PowerPoint portfolio or special project is helpful for parents to see students' progress.

ALWAYS POINT OUT POSITIVES to parents. It's good for kids to hear these as well. Help set goals so parents see a plan for growth.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR NEGATIVE situations to defuse.

BE A PART OF THE PROCESS—but don't take over.

—LAURA HAYDEN, DERBY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Angry Skies

Educators join to help colleagues survive the record-breaking storms of 2004.

Before Hurricane Charley smashed into Punta Gorda, Florida, on Friday the 13th of August, special education teacher Cathi Hile and her husband gathered their four children, ages 3, 5, 7, and 9, for a family talk about what could happen: a lot of wind and rain, trees could fall. It could get dangerous. Then they told each child to bring a favorite toy or stuffed animal to the bathroom and put it in the tub. When winds ripped their swimming pool fence out of the ground and sent it sailing over the roof, the family retreated to the bathroom, the safest room in the house. There they huddled together with two teddy bears, a doll, and a stuffed duck, singing "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" and other songs to keep panic at bay.

"The children were in the tub. My husband and I sat on the edge. We had a mattress ready to pull over the kids to protect them if the roof collapsed," recalls Cathi Hile.

When the storm finally passed, they saw that their roof was destroyed—shingles gone and plywood torn up. By the second

"WE HAD EXTENSIVE DAMAGE around here, but ESPs called in to see where help was needed."

—SANDRA CLARK, PRESIDENT OF BALDWIN COUNTY ESP

night, water-logged plaster ceilings were caving in and they were forced to get out, leaving them homeless for nearly three weeks until they found an apartment 25 miles away.

The Hiles were lucky. Charley killed 31 people in Florida. The storm cut a broad path through 25 of the state's 67 counties, ripping up power lines, houses, and schools, and upending life as people knew it.

But much more was on the way. During the next few weeks, three more hurricanes slashed through the state, and Florida officials said every single school closed for at least one day. Of 67 districts, only three were operating the day after Labor Day; several shut down for nearly three weeks.

In Pensacola, teachers teamed up with the local newspaper to mail lesson plan packages to parents while schools shut down after Hurricane Ivan, and teachers staffed a "Survivin' Ivan" hotline to answer parent questions on how to use them.

In Charlotte County, where 6 of 21 schools were destroyed or heavily damaged, students were forced to attend the remaining safe schools in shifts. Some start as early as 6 a.m. Others end as late as 7:10 p.m.

TEAMING UP

It was a double whammy for Charlotte High special education teacher Bryan Bouton, whose home in Punta Gorda was demolished just hours after he fled with his son and dog. When he came back and saw the damage, Bouton says, "I grabbed a pillow and blanket...and was going to sleep in my classroom. But my classroom was gone, too. There was nothing left but the floor."

"That storm," he says, "took a big hunk out of my life."

But Bouton said the union and school administration worked well together to get education started again. "It wasn't a top-down thing," he says. "Nobody has ever organized double sessions as fast as we did. We suffered, but the bigger story is how well we came back."

Throughout the state, in fact, members tell similar stories—of how union leaders and colleagues from across the country and state banded together to lend a hand through the crisis.

NEA President Reg Weaver toured the state by bus in October, stopping at Griffin Elemen-



Clockwise from the top left: Fort Pierce Central High School in Florida was hit by two hurricanes. The Poinciana High School gym roof now features huge skylights, unfortunately without the glass. Sarah Horton helped check more than 1,000 miles of roads in Mobile County, Alabama, to make sure they were safe for school buses. The Hile family survived Charley with their favorite toys in their bathroom, the only room left unscathed.



Fund For Florida Victims

The Florida Education Association (FEA) has created the FEA Hurricane Relief Fund to assist members who suffered heavy losses. In just three Florida counties, more than 100 FEA members became homeless and more than 600 sustained severe home damage—while countless others face repairs that insurance won't fully cover. And many will have to replace all of their possessions.

To help, you can send a check to:
FEA Hurricane Relief Fund
213 S. Adams St.
Tallahassee, FL 32301

tary School in the small rural town of Frostproof to deliver books, school supplies, and encouragement to educators there. Charley had blown off most of the school's roof, forcing the district to rent temporary space in a nearby church. Educators carried everything they could save to the church in four long days and then started teaching. Across the country, students at Jim Hill Middle School in Minot, North Dakota, laid plans to raise money for Griffin Elementary by raking leaves, baby-sitting, and walking neighborhood dogs, according to NEA Board of Directors member Pauline Wahl, a sixth-grade science teacher at the North Dakota school.

Meanwhile, 30 Broward Teachers Union members volunteered to work up to 21 continual days in another county, St. Lucie, to help clean and repair damaged schools.

ESPS TO THE RESCUE

While Florida got the worst blows from three of the hurricanes, Ivan inflicted severe damage in coastal Baldwin and Mobile counties in Alabama, along with the Florida panhandle.

But Ivan didn't keep school employees idle for long, not even Elberta paraeducator Shirley Campbell, left homeless by the storm. She immediately reported for duty at Elberta Middle School to help other education support professionals (ESPs) clean up debris and water.

"Our ESPs are fantastic," says school secretary/business manager Sandra Clark, president of Baldwin County ESP. "We had extensive damage around here, but ESPs called in to see where help was needed. Some even helped our school's neighbors clear debris from their yards!"

Cafeteria employees moved food from damaged schools and cooked meals in hurricane shelters, while security guards protected damaged schools.

And school bus drivers in Mobile County's 615-vehicle fleet played a critical role as the "evacuation machinery" for their region, notes fleet manager Bob Brunson. He easily got 20 drivers to volunteer for duty during the storm to evacuate elderly and disabled residents. Eight ESPs were

called in to ferry people and property, including breathing machines, to seven shelters.

"We did a good job!" says proud driver Stephanie Lindsay, who steered her bus through wind and rain.

Finally, before Mobile County schools returned to business, transportation department utility workers such as Sarah Horton inspected "every inch" of this district's 1,238 miles of roads to ensure removal of debris and power lines from bus routes.

"I even drove my truck down narrow dirt roads to ensure they were passable," Horton reports. "It's part of an ESP's job of ensuring that children are safe!" **nea**

—ALAIN JEHLLEN AND DAVE WINANS

A new generation of cheaters uses modern methods to grab grades. But you can catch them with a combination of high-tech sleuthing and old-fashioned teaching.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

Cyber-Cheating



Montana high school English teacher Steve Gardiner still remembers finding the perfect Macbeth paper in the middle of his stack almost five years ago. It screamed out for an A. And then, right below it, another fantastic analysis of Shakespeare's cursed play—exactly the same as the first.

When Gardiner confronted the devious duo the next day, he expected to find one creator and one copier. Instead, each sheepishly admitted to finding the paper on the Web and downloading it independently. It was mere chance that they ended up in consecutive order on his desk.

"I was devastated," he recalls.

At that, Gardiner put down his pencil and sharpened his wits. After plugging a few sentences into an Internet search engine, he quickly found the plagiarized Macbeth paper for sale. Then, within just minutes, he found a half-dozen more that had been sold and submitted for his grade book.

"It was a real eye-opener for me to realize how easy it was to (download student papers.) At that point I wasn't even aware that those sites exist," Gardiner says. Now he and his colleagues at Billings Senior High School routinely check papers and warn their students to beware.

"I understand cyber-cheating and I will catch you," Gardiner promises his kids. "It'll take me longer to fill out the discipline slip than it will take me to find (your paper) on the Internet."

Bluster and threats aside, Gardiner still finds plagiarized papers. The problem is, more and more, kids cheat.

It's easier these days, for one thing. Cell phones make it a cinch to send or store test answers or, with a few keystrokes, even search for hints on the Internet. Outside of class, dozens of companies sell "Grade-A" essays on the Web: www.schoolsucks.com, www.ivyessays.com, www.lazystudents.com, and more.

In a 2002 survey by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 74 percent of high school students admitted to cheating on at least one exam within the last year, up from 61 percent in 1992. Perhaps more troubling, almost half agreed with the statement: "A person has to lie or cheat sometimes to get ahead."

Facing that kind of attitude, what are educators to do? Students are becoming more sophisticated stealers, relying on spy strategies that seem positively CIA-ish, sometimes with little remorse. Still, NEA members say there are ways to pluck out the plagiarists, using time-tested techniques that have worked for years, and also by turning their new-age weapons back on them.

Policing Plagiarists

TURN THE TABLES

Just like their students, teachers can turn to technology for help. It doesn't cost anything but a few minutes to take a few phrases from your student's unusually savvy essay and run them through Google, AltaVista, or any other search engine, says Patti Tjomsland, a Washington media specialist who has conducted seminars on treating the plagiarism epidemic.

"(A quick search) has led us to the source more times than I care to think about," says Don Mack, technology facilitator at

Laramie High School in Wyoming.

HIRE A DETECTIVE

If you'd rather leave it to the pros, a number of companies, like iParadigms and CaNexus, also sell products that chase cheaters. Submit a paper, and these programs search for matching text strings in books and journals, online sources, and databases of essays, including those offered by the so-called paper mills.

"It's not fair to let honest students get out-competed by their dishonest peers," says iParadigms founder John Barrie, whose expanding service checks about 20,000 student essays a day, at a cost of about 60 cents per student per year. About one-third raise red flags—many from your finest students, who desperately want good grades and the best colleges, he adds.

USE MORE WRITING

Feeling frugal? "We don't have a lot of money to spend on things like that," says Wyoming's Mack of anti-cheating products. His teachers assign papers early in the year, including in-class jobs, so they can become familiar with each student's skills and style.

Last year, an essay-winner at Van Nuys Middle School in Sherman Oaks, California, lost his prize when a sharp-eyed teacher noticed that the winning entry didn't much resemble the student's regular work, says English teacher Emily Ettinger.

"You can usually tell," she says.

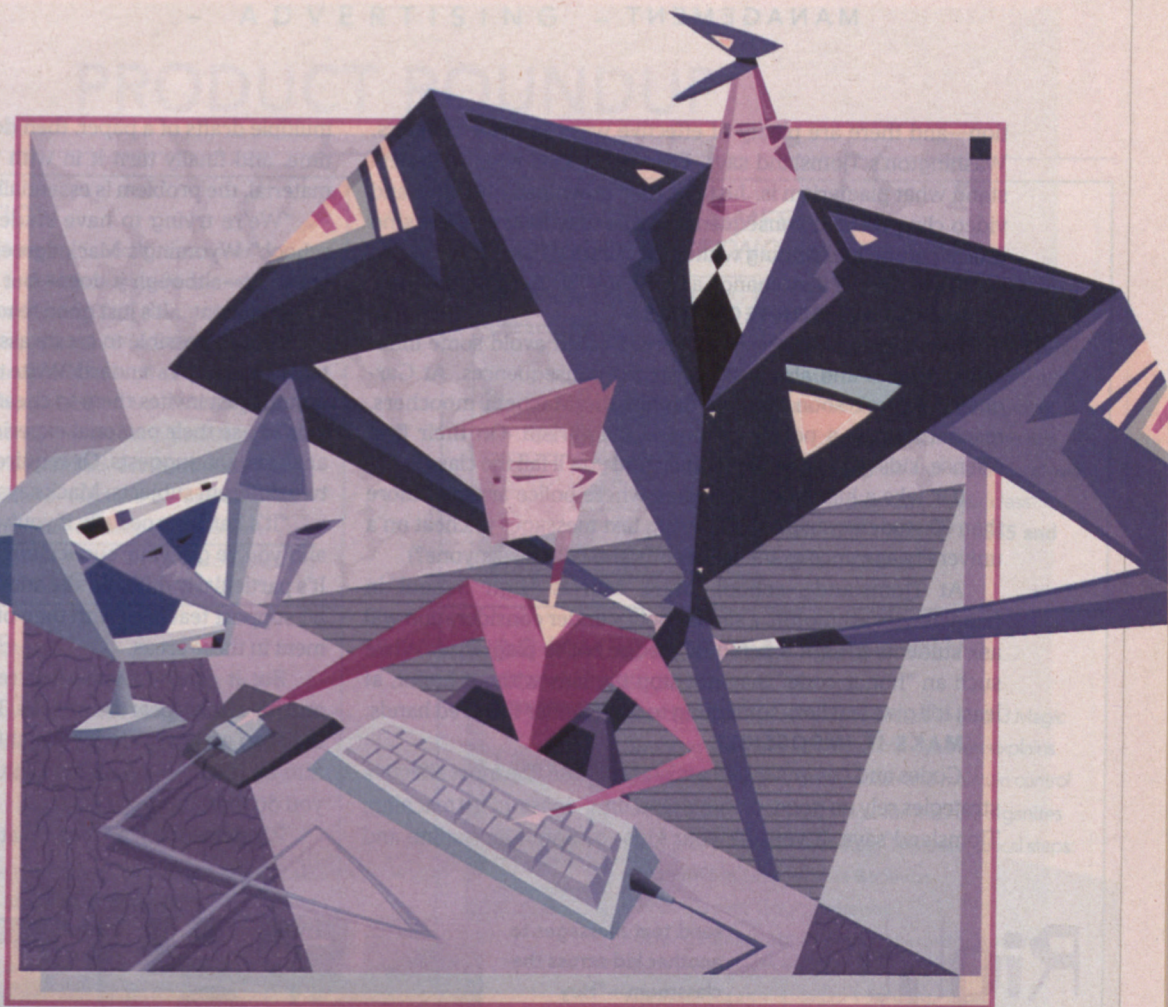
WATCH FOR CLUES

Frequently bought papers sound "too good," Gardiner says. (Or bizarre—a few years ago, Tjomsland heard about a plagiarized paper on drug use. When the pre-teen author claimed to have written, "Yes, I was a cocaine addict for five years," it was a dead give-away!)

Always check the citations—if a student buys or borrows, the citations often will be old or absent. Look carefully at its presentation—are the margins skewed? Are the fonts odd? At Laramie High, one particularly lazy looter printed his paper off the Internet with the Web address still scrawled across the top.

JUST ASK

Simplest of all, just ask students to talk to you about the assignment. If they can't summarize their paper's main points, they probably didn't write it.



Gardiner knows some teachers who'd rather not assign research papers anymore—they've thrown up their hands in frustration. He doesn't blame them, but it still seems a shame, he says. Being able to find relevant evidence and compile it coherently, "is an important skill that they'll need in life," he says.

Preventing Plagiarists

DEVELOP CREATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

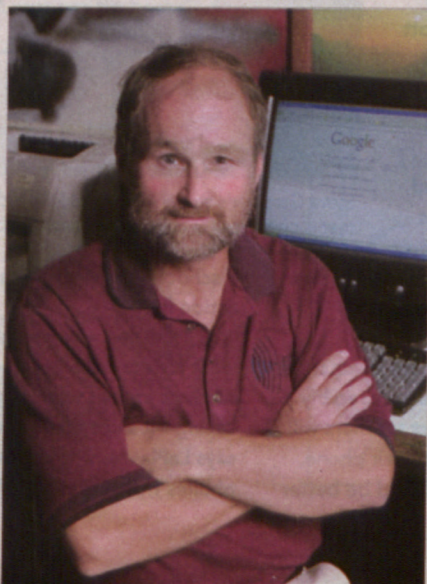
In a study published this year, researchers at Santa Clara University suggest kids plagiarize, at least in part, because traditional assignments like term papers seem irrelevant to them.

Rather than focus on nabbing cheaters, they suggest teachers try to create assignments that interest kids.

Using alternative media, like storyboards, comic strips, or digital slide-shows, or asking kids to develop Web-based portfolios of their work could be engaging. Students usually love to work together—figure out a way to fairly grade a team's research paper and try it.

DEFINE PLAGIARISM

The California study suggests prevention may be a better tactic than detec-



"I understand cyber-cheating and I will catch you," Montana English teacher **Steve Gardiner** warns students.

tion—and there are plenty of effective ways to deter cheaters, Washington's Tjomsland says. First of all, kids need to understand what plagiarism is. Just like they download hit songs and video clips without consequence, some may believe there's no foul in cutting and pasting without attribution.

"They think if they change a word, they've fixed it," she says.

DEFINE ITS CONSEQUENCES

Developing a policy on plagiarism could avoid some innocent mistakes and also make clear the consequences. At Gardiner's school, soon after he caught the Macbeth moochers, teachers wrote a policy for online plagiarism. On their first offense, kids get a zero. Try it again and you'll fail the class.

(Or take a hint from Shanghai, where police arrested more than 20 students suspected of using text messages to cheat on a university entrance exam. Handcuffs and jail cells, anyone?)

At Tjomsland's school, Mark Morris High School in Longview, Washington, a similar policy under consideration will ask students to sign a personal pledge not to plagiarize. While such an "honor code" may not stop the kids without honor, at least it'll give teachers something to wave under their red hands.

MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE

Codes and computerized assistance aside, the most effective strategies rely on good, creative (and time-consuming) teaching, Tjomsland says. If you ask your kids to submit an outline and

multiple drafts of a paper, then do some work on it during class time, and finally turn it in with photocopies of their research material, the problem is essentially solved.

"We're trying to have students do more of their work at school," Wyoming's Mack agrees. "It's not so much to prevent cheating—although it does—but to provide advice and counsel to the student....It's just good teaching."

It's also possible to create assignments that defy plagiarism, teachers say. "A standard 'Write the biography of George Washington,' just invites them to cheat," says Tjomsland. Instead, ask kids to use their personal experience or community life in their analysis, she suggests. Or require them to compare and contrast two different subjects, Mack says.

"It's hard—especially if you've been teaching for a long time and you've got your curriculum set," Tjomsland acknowledges. It's particularly difficult, she adds, if your school or district doesn't support teachers with time off to seek professional development in these areas.

But it can be done—just remember Montana's Gardiner and his Shakespearean sneaks. These days, he's less often a victim than an advocate for watchfulness. Colleagues come up to him all the time, recall his sleuthing work, and ask, "How did you do that?"

It's elementary, my dear Watson! **nea**

Right Under Your Nose

Spotting cheaters often goes beyond detecting that Web-bought term paper.

Even as educators deal with plagiarists who turn their home computers into counterfeiting machines, they also have to catch up with the latest trends in cheating taking place inside the classroom. Turns out cheating has gotten a lot more sophisticated than crumpled notes in shirt-sleeves or penned answers on sweaty palms.

With a cell phone, a finger, and a few seconds, students can

send text messages to another kid across the classroom—"Hey buddy, what's the answer to #18?" They can even log on to the Internet and search for the formula to solve your gotcha math problems.

During an exam at one Wisconsin high school, kids were caught listening to tape-recorded notes on hidden earphones. At another, Racine history teacher Scott LaPlante nabbed a girl snapping photographs of an exam with a camera cell phone. She had slid the paper onto the classroom floor when LaPlante caught her leaning over with the lens pointed at his stumpers.

It wasn't too hard to catch her—unless a class is incredibly overcrowded, most teachers will see a kid whip out their phone, LaPlante says. Still, it'd be better



Steve Gardiner's students demonstrate a cheating technique that is on the rise in classrooms across the country.

if school policies could take action first.

"I can see why parents might want kids to have cell phones, but let's look at who they're calling—it's not their parents," says LaPlante, who'd like to ban phones from his school. "We're

paid to protect the integrity of the learning environment, and I don't think they're conducive to learning."

Some states, including Florida and Massachusetts, have banned phones during the administration of state exams. In a South Florida high school, one student's graduation plans were ground out last spring when she was caught with a phone during a bathroom break. Likewise, the College Board has told schools to prohibit phones from desktops during Advanced Placement exams.

It's a sign of the times, LaPlante says.

"You go back to the good old days of cheating and they wrote the answers on their hands. There's just new ways of cheating and more of them," LaPlante says. "Look at corporate America! My kids tell me that people cheat all the time."

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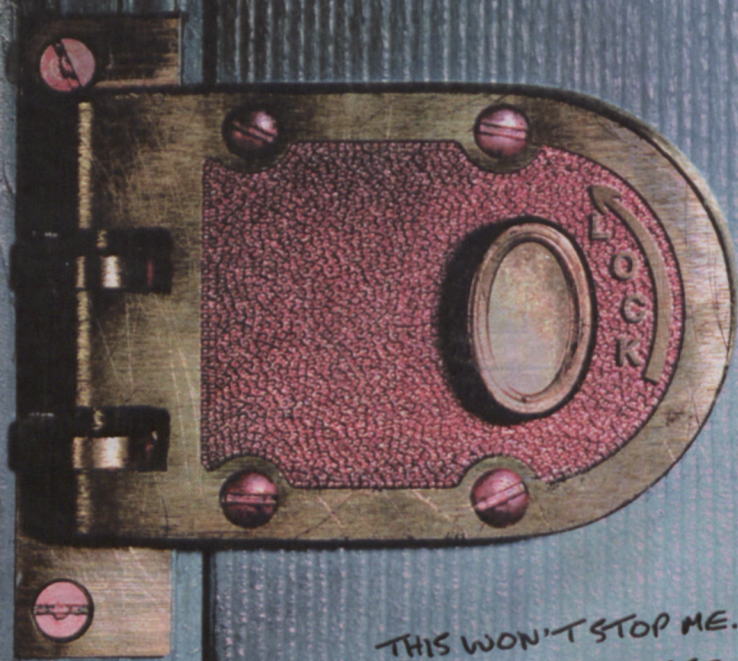
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A Voice of Their Own

Pennsylvania affiliate organizes 3,000 new support professionals.

Paraeducator Roe Paolucci likes her demanding job in a Monroe County (Pennsylvania) school, enjoys working with kids, and feels "blessed" with three classroom co-workers, a special education teacher, and two mental health professionals.

Colonial IU 20 ESP/PSEA, born June 9 when "IU 20" ESPs voted by 73 percent for representation by the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA).

Support professionals such as Paolucci are writing a new labor history chapter in Pennsylvania, a state with a strong



After ESPs in Intermediate Unit 20 voted for the union, teachers invited them to their annual local clambake. Seated fourth and fifth from the left are teacher and ESP local presidents **Elaine King** and **Roe Paolucci**.

With an annual salary of \$14,000—for a job that starts at just \$6 an hour—this dedicated nine-year vet is a veritable bargain for the Colonial Intermediate Unit (IU) 20, a state agency that provides special ed and therapy services to 13 districts.

But this bargain employee has just gained her own bargaining power, over concerns such as "respect, money, and job demands" that have long haunted her 296 education support professional colleagues. Paolucci's the first president of a brand-new NEA local affiliate,

union tradition. Since April 2002, ESPs have voted for PSEA representation in 28 of 29 union elections, bringing a potential of 3,000 new members to NEA.

Ask PSEA organizers and they'll tell you what's happening is not exactly new. PSEA has just given new life to an old philosophy: The strongest union is built by members themselves, and their bargaining power comes through "wall-to-wall" membership in every work site.

How is this philosophy becoming practice?

MAXIMUM INVOLVEMENT. If you want Association recognition in the Keystone State, you join a large, active ESP organizing committee and work very hard for it, say members. While PSEA provides coordination, training, and research, "we insist on person-to-person organizing; it's ESPs who are doing this, not paid staff," stresses PSEA external organizing director Joe Bugden. "We won't start a campaign unless 10 percent of the unit is on the organizing committee."

In IU 20, which spans 95 work sites in three counties, ESPs formed two regional committees that organized, often independently of each another, in the face of management resistance to unionization.

EMPLOYEE VOICES. PSEA encourages Pennsylvania's 10,000 unorganized ESPs to define their own concerns. Roe Paolucci did just that during a pre-election employee "grievance" meeting with a top administrator, noting that she had been required to attend after-work meetings at another school, a 60-mile drive, without pay or mileage reimbursement.

"I got my time and my travel pay at that meeting," she proudly recalls. Now Paolucci and her fellow local members are defining their issues in a more systematic way: on a PSEA bargaining survey.

And when it comes to the issues, PSEA staff organizers have heard it all. While the typical unorganized ESP may be satisfied with her work, she's still an "at-will" employee who can be terminated without cause. Her pay or health benefits may be substandard. Her superintendent might be clueless about the so-called No Child Left Behind law's "highly qualified"

standards for paraeducators. Her district's policies for ESPs are probably unwritten and inconsistent. And the respect she receives as a professional is usually pretty sparse.

COLLEGIAL SUPPORT. When it comes to ESP organizing, the respect and support is there from existing PSEA ESP and teacher locals. A statewide cadre of ESP local leaders assists organizing committees, while teachers routinely back ESP campaigns in their districts by wearing PSEA buttons, putting out the union message on school bulletin boards, and even writing personal letters to ESP co-workers.

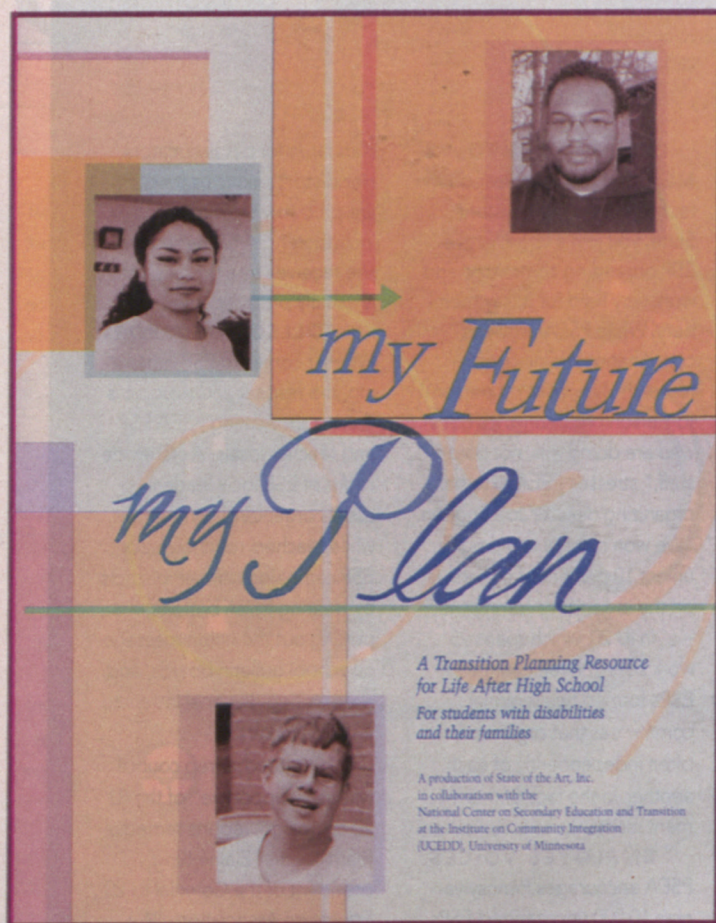
"Our teacher rep council was very supportive" of the IU 20 campaign, reports remedial math teacher Elaine King, president of the Colonial IU 20 Education Association. "We always wanted the support staff to organize, from year one! We urged them to go to recruitment meetings, we turned over support staff names to PSEA, and we talked to everyone with whom we came in contact."

IU 20 teachers are "thrilled" about the ESPs' election win, King concludes. "Our ESPs are truly professional and should be part of this union. They're entitled to more than they get for how hard they work to support our program."

—DAVE WINANS

More ESP stories in this issue:

- **Michigan ESPs stop privatization of custodial work** — Page 12
- **Georgia local wins fear-free ESP grievance procedure** — Page 19
- **Illinois local keeps transportation services in-house** — Page 19
- **Coming in January: a day in the life of a cafeteria worker!**



Available in both English and Spanish, ***My Future My Plan*** is a “must have” resource for special and general education teachers, families and students.

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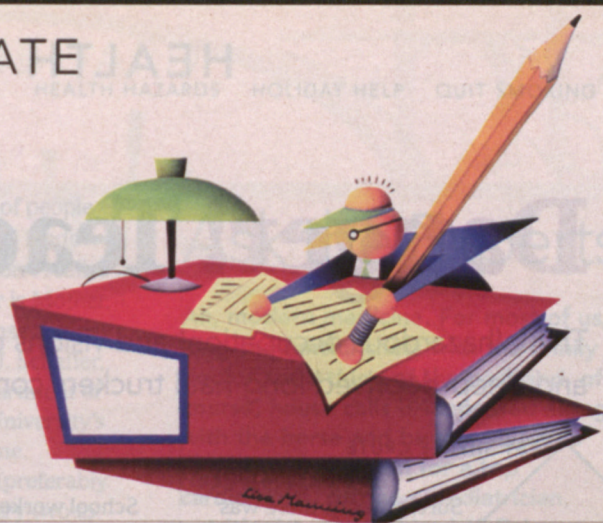
Life doesn't end after high school

But for students with disabilities, planning for that transition can be challenging. Now, students with IEPs are required by law to have a transition plan in place by age 14.

My Future My Plan is a transition planning resource that encourages early, student-centered transition planning for students with disabilities. This three-part resource includes:

- A 30-minute videotape and discussion guide
- A workbook guiding students through every important area of transition planning, including: self-advocacy, legal rights, IEP meetings, health, post-secondary education, employment, adult services, transportation, and others
- A 36-page companion guide to the student workbook with suggestions for teachers and family members on how they can support students in the transition planning process

Should teachers allow students to use profanity in their writing?



YES

I never announce to my students, "Please include profanity in your writing!" But I don't ban it.

We want to encourage students to write. My students in particular—at-risk, older teens—have felt disenfranchised from our public education system, and that includes writing. They have spent most of their years in schools being told what not to do. So many come to my school afraid to write, or with other negative attitudes about writing.

There is the old saying, "Pick your battles!" I would rather win the writing battle than the profanity one.

We often ask students to write from their personal knowledge and experiences. Many of my students come from homes where they hear profanity used freely and frequently. And it has also



been proven that writing can be a tool for releasing emotional pain.

When I see profanity in students' writing and don't feel it's appropriate, I use it as a teaching moment. It gives me an opportunity to

cover such topics as the power of words and the power of using certain ones sparingly rather than frequently. It also comes up in government classes when we talk about the First Amendment.

We have discussions about where profanity might be appropriate and where it isn't. In my students' home lives, profanity is so pervasive that I actually have to teach them why it is not acceptable in certain places and situations (a job interview, for example).

But because I don't ban it, I really don't see it that often. When I do, if I feel

that other words would be better choices, then I gently offer alternatives. I treat the profanity as I would any other word where a different word could be better. It works.

We have to prepare students to deal with the real world. In the real world, sometimes they will hear or see profanity, and at other times it is definitely unacceptable. They need to know the difference.

ROB KOPLAN teaches English and Social Studies at Stone High School, an alternative public school in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

NO

Have I come to a point in my career where I am comfortable allowing my students to express themselves in any way they deem appropriate, including profanity? My answer is irrefutably and decisively no! Students should not be allowed under any circumstances to use profanity in their writing while they are in a public school.

One of the most important lessons I teach my students is that writing is a moral exercise. This influential tool can inspire and shape an individual's perspective. Words then become the source of nourishment for this inspiration. Words can soothe and caress the core of an individual. Words can sting and inflame the spirit. Words are power.

My problem as an educator is not about censorship,



but about exposing this generation to something they might otherwise not see—the power to create imaginative essays with words of substance. It is almost too simplistic to allow students to use profanity. It does not take any real effort on the students' part to use vulgarity in writing. They are exposed to it daily by the media. The real test is to challenge them to find other ways to express themselves that have the same effect as these profane words.

Profanity in writing is at times merely used as a shock element. Some students actually believe it is an expression of their generation. They think their generation invented profanity. My students find it humorous when I tell them I can easily conjugate those words in more creative ways

than they ever knew existed.

Students will argue that it is their right to express themselves as they see fit. They may be right in a way, but reality is colored quite differently. Young kids still need to be guided by the adults in their lives.

When they spill into the community as adults, they will have choices to make for themselves. Wouldn't it be fabulous if they had a wealth of words with which to express those choices?

NELLIE UGARTE teaches English at Montwood High School, El Paso, Texas.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should teachers allow students to use profanity in their writing?

To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should students be required to wear seat belts on school buses?

The tally on this NEA Today Debate question:
35% Yes 65% No

Should tracking be abolished?

If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

Danger! Teachers Working

Think 'hazardous occupation' and visions of catwalking construction workers and sleep-deprived long-haul truckers come to mind. But educators?

BY SHEREE CRUTE

CAUTION

Sure, you say, there was that time you sprained your ankle chasing Johnny around the playground, but kids, lesson plans, and lunch trays don't usually cause physical strain, do they?

Actually, yes, according to a recent report by the Directors of Health Promotion and Education. In fact, education workers have higher rates of respiratory infections, chronic voice disorders, and musculoskeletal problems than people in other professions. The good news is that every one of these school-based health headaches can be addressed by giving yourself a little TLC. Here's how to heal these job-related health risks for good.

IS IT SOMETHING IN THE AIR?

Everything, from Charlie the classroom hamster (pet dander) to chalk dust and dirty heating systems, is giving teachers higher than average rates of asthma, allergies, and chronic lung infections. "Clearing the air can be simple if you attack the problem on several fronts," says allergist Pamela A. Georgeson, D.O., a fellow with the American Academy of Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI). Her advice:

OPEN the windows.

SWITCH to a chalkless classroom and invest in non-toxic markers.

PICK UP a HEPA filter for your classroom. "They really work," Georgeson says.

BE AWARE. Prolonged fatigue, headaches, and sinus troubles that don't respond to medication may mean your school has "sick building syndrome," a buildup of toxic mold or bacteria in ventilation systems. For advice, contact the Environmental Protection Agency's School for Tools Program.

GESUNDHEIT! Look out across the classroom each winter and what do you see? Row after row of runny little noses.

School worker exposure to germs is on par with folks in constant contact with the public. So how do you cold-proof your classroom? "If it's grade appropriate, get a little help from the kids," says Charles Inlander, director of the People's Medical Society and author of *77 Ways to Beat Colds and Flu*:

KICK OFF cold and flu season by assigning a report on how to prevent colds and flu and talk about it in class.

SPRAY or wash with Lysol in the classroom to cut down on the spread of infections like strep throat.

GET LOTS of sleep, eat well to keep your defenses up, and get a flu shot.

IT'S JUST A FROG IN MY THROAT.

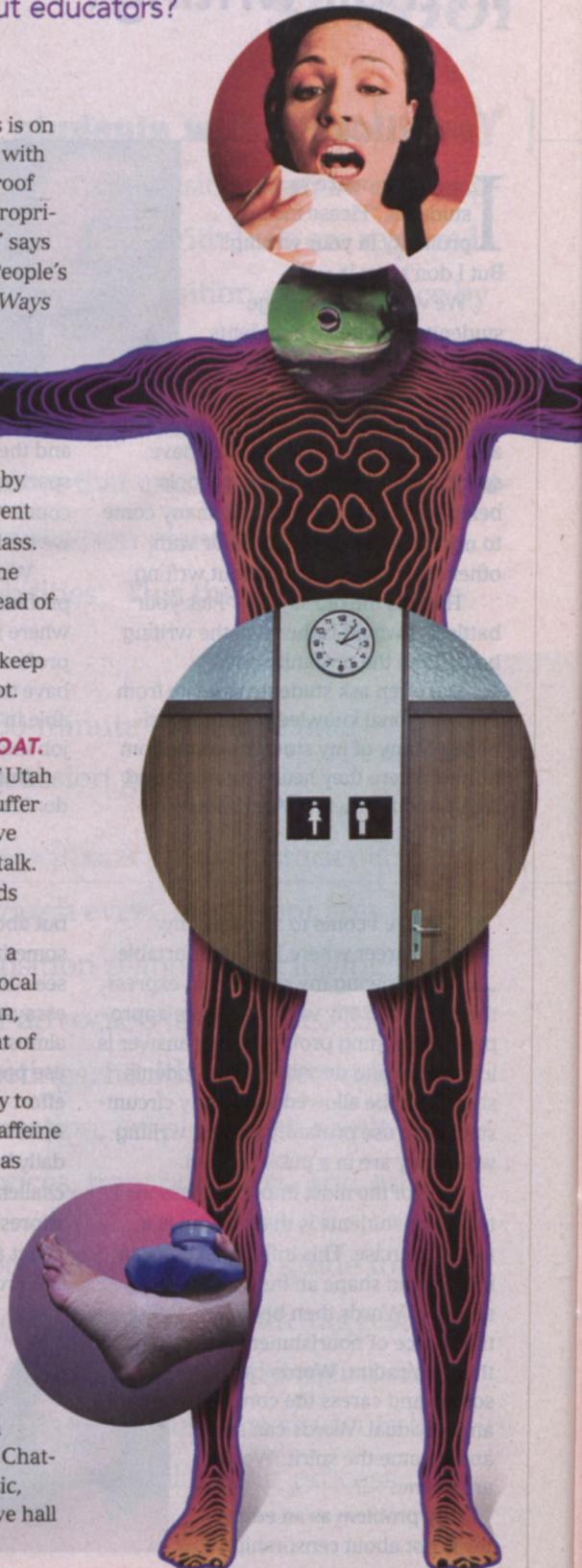
A recent study at the University of Utah found that one in three teachers suffer from voice problems and one in five miss work because they just can't talk. Since quieting a cafeteria full of kids with a mere wave of your hand is unlikely, a voice fitness program is a must. "Begin by practicing good vocal hygiene," says Candice M. Coleman, Ph.D., a speech coach and president of Say It Well, Inc. That means:

DRINK 64 ounces of water a day to keep vocal cords hydrated. Avoid caffeine and foods that coat the throat such as milk and fruit juices (it's the sugar).

DON'T DRY out your throat by overusing cold medications, smoking, or being near smoke.

WARM UP your voice by humming softly for 10 minutes in the shower each morning (actual singing is too harsh).

INVEST in a voice amplification system (Coleman recommends the Chatterbox), especially if you teach music, gym, or very young children or have hall or bus duty.



NEVER whisper, it actually irritates vocal cords. Talk quietly instead.

I'M ALWAYS BENT OVER LIKE THIS.

What do paraeducators, special education teachers, bus drivers, and school maintenance workers share? Disproportionately high rates of chronic back pain and sore joints. "People who work with developmentally disabled children are likely to have acute injuries from back strain caused by lifting a child," says Boyd Buser, D.O., a back pain specialist who sees lots of teachers in his practice. The trick is learning how to move properly:

NEVER BEND your body and simultaneously twist your torso. When you lift

something or put it down, make sure it's directly in front of you. Go down on one knee, rather than bending.

STRENGTHEN your abdominal muscles and wear a good back support (they're in drug stores) if you have chronic problems.

GET A stool with rollers and sit next to kids rather than bending over, advises Leslie Jackson, an occupational therapist who specializes in schools. Or place chairs around the room for quick rest stops.

KEEPING your weight under control and getting at least three or four workouts a week is the best overall prevention.

I CAN HOLD IT A LITTLE LONGER.

Part teacher, part camel? Learning to avoid needed trips to the bathroom has placed teachers (along with nurses and

pilots) at the top of the list of people suffering occupation-related bladder problems. "Many people don't realize that 'emptying the bladder is Mother Nature's number one defense against infections," says Anthony J. Schaffer, M.D., chairman of the department of urology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine.

DRINK plenty of fluids (preferably water) and void at least every two to two-and-one-half hours. If necessary, work out a system with other teachers to make regular bathroom visits possible.

LIMIT your intake of high-acid foods such as coffee and soda.

I HARDLY NOTICE THE LIMP.

Ever heard of plantar fasciitis? It's a fancy term for a severely painful heel inflammation that—you guessed it—is extremely common among teachers, along with aching feet.

"I see lots of teachers in my practice," says Naomi Shields, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon. To banish foot pain blues, Shields says:

WEAR shoes with supportive soles and crepe or rubber heels no higher than one inch. Casual sneakers aren't a good choice.

WORK those feet every day. Do ankle circles, five or more in each direction on each foot, and move feet up and down. Try writing the letters of the alphabet with your feet. Then curl toes in and out a few times.

For a list of Web sites on the topics covered in this article, go to www.nea.org/neatodayextra.

WWW.NEA.ORG/NEATODAYEXTRA

Ask the Experts

Ah, modern medicine. For most of us, long thoughtful chats with the family doctor are a thing of the past and, of course, house calls disappeared along with the horse and buggy. So let us help. Got a question for a top cardiologist, surgeon, pediatrician, nutritionist, or psychiatrist? Raise your hand and we'll call on you. Send queries to sholcomb@nea.org.

Q: I confess I've put off quitting smoking for years (I'm only 33). Now my husband says he's heard smoking can be even more dangerous than we thought and especially harmful to women. Is it true? And what's the best way to quit?

A.M.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

A: First, give your husband a big hug for being smart enough to be up on the latest research. He's right. "We now know that the toxins from smoking go everywhere in the body that blood flows," says Joel London, M.P.H., from the office of smoking and health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. "It not only causes lung cancer, it can contribute to cancers of the cervix and pancreas, leukemia, even gum disease." On top of that, a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in April found that women were far more susceptible to the cancer causing properties of cigarette smoke than men.

As for quitting, London says research shows you can "double your chances of success if you use a telephone support line and a nicotine replacement system." This month, you also have the best possible help. The American Cancer Society's great American Smokeout is on November 18. Call 800-ACS-2345 or log on to www.quit-smoking.net for lots more free advice and support.

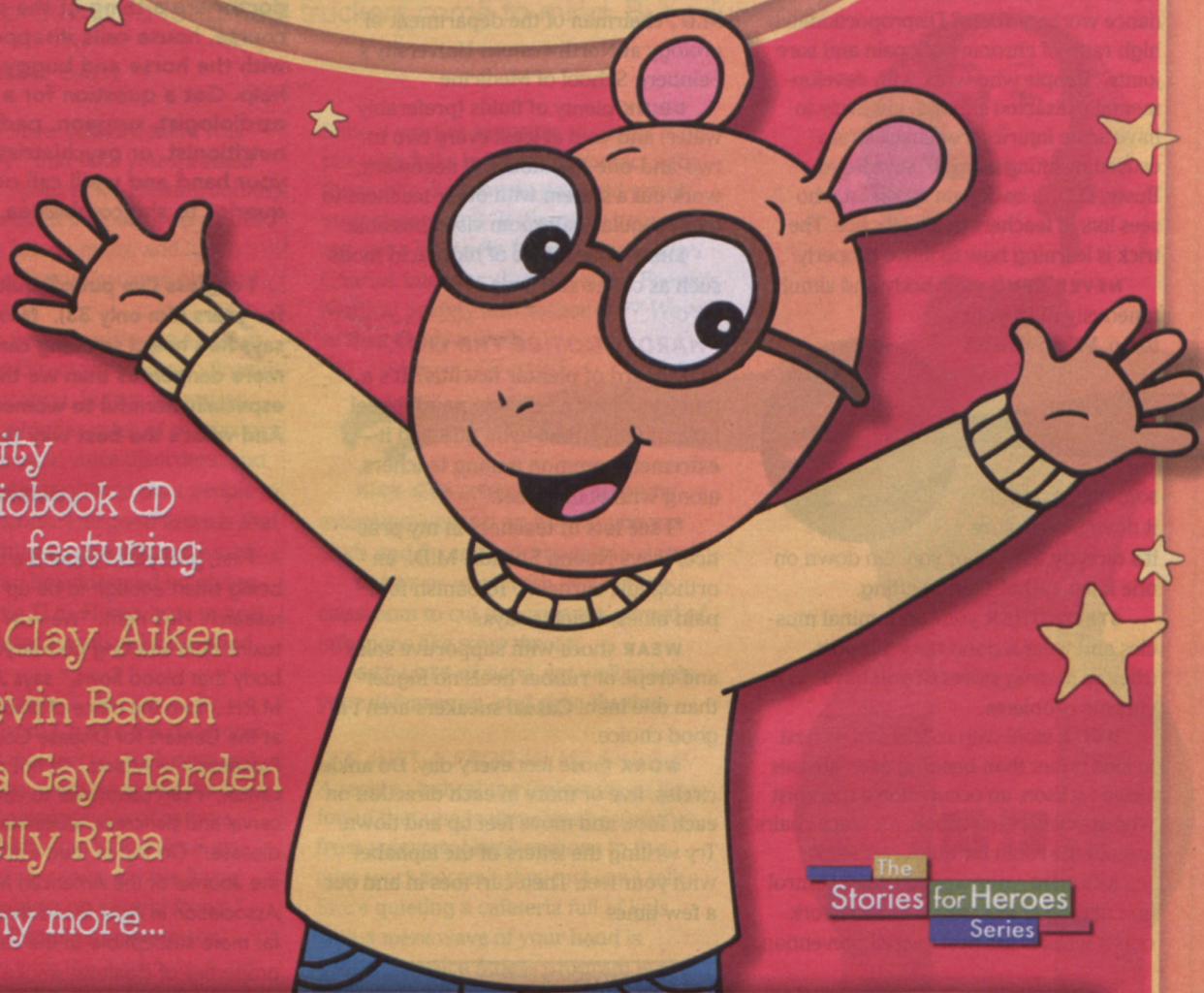
Got Elves?

Need a solution to the body-battering stress of holiday shopping, cooking and decorating for your home and classroom? Professional organizers Ramona Creel of Onlineorganizing.com and Peggy Umansky of Itsabout-time.com offer this advice for a heavenly holiday.

START A CHRISTMAS CLUB (OR HANUKKAH, OR KWANZAA). St. Nick couldn't get the job done without helpers and neither can you. "Using the concept of a book club," Umansky says, "form a group of friends or fellow teachers. Map out the weeks until the holiday. Pick one week or weekend for the team to work for each person." Each week, Umansky explains, the team can help shop or decorate a home or classroom for one member. All work sessions end with a girls' or guys' night out, your personal stress relief, and the perfect way to get through holidays with half the work and twice the fun.

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Future Leaders

Does anyone have suggestions for materials to help general ed students develop their leadership skills?

NAN MCCALLUM
High school teacher,
Plymouth-Canton, Michigan

ANSWER: Contact your local Boy Scouts. Look at the literature and ask for the person who does Junior Leader Training. They teach leadership in fun ways. Having been a Scoutmaster for eight years, I find much of it has crept into how I teach my life skills class for learning disabled kids.

KATE GILLOW-WILES
High school special education teacher, Junction City, Oregon

Wondering About Wanderers

We have a large problem at our high school with students roaming the halls during classes. They have passes, but each teacher's policy is different—some are strict, others are not. Any advice?

SHELLEY MITCHELL
Biology teacher, Stillwater, Oklahoma

ANSWER: My school requires students to have planner books. I include a hall pass section. Students must have their planner to leave class. You can instantly see if students are abusing the privilege since the hall pass includes the date, time, and reason. The planners have greatly limited the number of wanderers!

CHRIS MCCORMICK
Student activities director and math teacher, Wheatland, California

ANSWER: I require students who leave (except for an emergency) to make up the time during recess or after school. Students return their passes to me and I throw them away when they make up their time. The result: Very few ask to leave, and those who do really need to go.

VIRGINIA COLEMAN
Sixth-grade teacher, Parker, Arizona



Homework Dodgers

My system for getting students to do their homework works for all but the diehards. Does anyone have secrets for reaching them?

SUE KAST
Teacher, Pleasanton, California

ANSWER: I have five who come to my room at the end of each day with agenda books filled out. I circle all the assignments for that evening with an orange marker. The parents sign the book



after the student does the work. The students bring me their books the next morning. They get a check if there is no parent signature and a check if they do not bring me their agenda book at the end of the

day. Four checks in one month equals a half-hour detention.

JEANNIE MARFELL
Junior and senior high school resource teacher, Divernon, Illinois

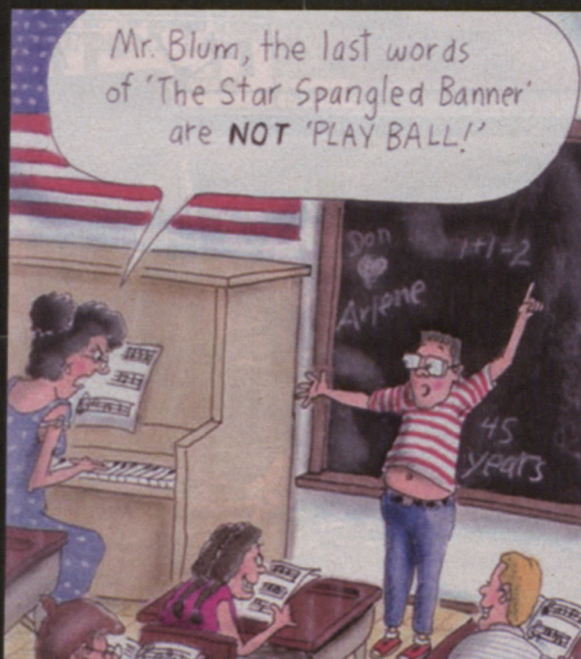
Comparative poetry?

On our Colorado fourth-grade reading exam, the items missed most often are about poetry. We read and write poems, but for this test, students have to compare poems. Does anyone know of good teaching materials for that?

RITA CONLEY
Elementary school teacher, Arvada, Colorado



Mr. Blum, the last words of 'The Star Spangled Banner' are NOT 'PLAY BALL!'



Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What's the best way to get kids to make healthy choices in the cafeteria?

Send your answers to this or to other questions on this page to ajehlen@nea.org. Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

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It's a Twister!

"The first thing I thought was that I was just so thankful we didn't have any kids in the building at the time," says Phil Severson, reflecting on the tornado that ravaged his school in May. "The second thing I thought was, how the hell am I going to get out of here!"

IT WAS 8:40 P.M. AND SEVERSON, an eighth-grade math teacher at Norris Middle School in Firth, Nebraska, was in his classroom working on his year-end grades. Suddenly, he heard glass shatter. A tornado had struck his school, and he was the only one in the building. Fortunately, the previous day had been the last day of school for the district.

"My room is an interior classroom, so I have no windows, except on the door," says Severson. "I went to the inner wall of the room and sat and waited. I think it lasted about a minute, although it felt a lot longer."

When Severson finally navigated his way out of his classroom to survey the scene, he saw debris everywhere. He also happened upon residents from a neighboring town who had

been caught in the storm on their drive home. Severson led them back to the safety of his classroom where they waited out another storm warning.

The middle school, neighboring elementary and high schools, and outdoor facilities sustained millions of dollars in damages. But the community united, and about 1,400 people came out on the designated clean-up days to fix up the schools.

Although rebuilding will take time, school officials started the new school year in early September, just a few weeks after the scheduled start date. The school is using portable classrooms until construction is complete, sometime in November. Meanwhile, Severson is hoping that this school year will be a little less eventful.

—EMILY GOODMAN



Phil Severson tells the story of his close encounter with the tornado that ravaged his school.



Something To Say

Growing up, Alice Faye Duncan loved to read and write. "I fell in love with the idea of being the next Lorraine Hansberry," she confesses.

AN AWARD-WINNING children's book author and school librarian, Duncan is on her way to achieving her goal. Her first book, *The National Civil Rights Museum Celebrates Everyday People*, won a Notable Book Award. It was followed by *Willie Jerome*, which received a Reading Rainbow Award, and *Miss Viola and Uncle Ed Lee*, a critical success and a favorite with readers. Her most recent work, *Honey Baby Sugar Child*, will be in print early next year.

They're successes that would make anyone proud, but what really tickles Duncan is when her high school students tell her they first fell in love with her books in elementary school. Duncan uses her work to teach these aspiring young writers and poets at Middle College High School in Memphis, Tennessee, about the art of writing. "It's especially important for children to read more poetry," says Duncan. "Poetry helps facilitate reading, writing, and learning in general."

The inspiration for the poetic *Honey Baby Sugar Child* came to Duncan through a conversation with a friend about



her friend's love for her grandchildren. "The little girls in my neighborhood used to say 'honey baby sugar child' when they wanted you to take special heed of what they had to say," recalls Duncan. "I couldn't think of a better phrase to describe a mother's emphatic love for her child." Duncan, who is hard at work on her next book, *Christmas Soup*, makes author visits and conducts literacy workshops for teachers across the country.

—VANESSA ST. LEGER

A Vintage Campaign

John McIntyre isn't one to sit around. Last year, after retiring from teaching, the wine enthusiast landed a job with great perks when he started working at a friend's wine boutique in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.



THIS YEAR, McIntyre will indulge another passion when he hits the campaign trail in his bid for a state Senate seat.

If McIntyre's track record holds, it will be a tightrope race. He ran twice for the state House of Representatives and, incredibly, tied his opponent each time after recounts and appeals were completed. The races were decided by the House, with McIntyre being awarded one election and his opponent the other.

Explaining his decision to run again, McIntyre says that campaigning "gets in one's blood." He maintains he's the best candidate for the job because he has the ears of people who need his assistance, and as a former middle school counselor, he has experience in solving problems. "I'm able to listen to people and I can help them come together," he says of the skills he's learned through teaching. In fact, McIntyre hopes his run for office will encourage more educators to be politically active. He's already hired several teachers to help operate his own campaign.

If elected, McIntyre hopes to revisit many issues he considers unsatisfactory in the state's current political system, including minimum wage and health insurance. Planning to take time off from the winery, McIntyre is prepared to make South Dakota his top priority.

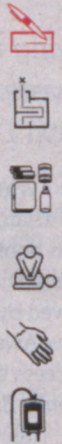
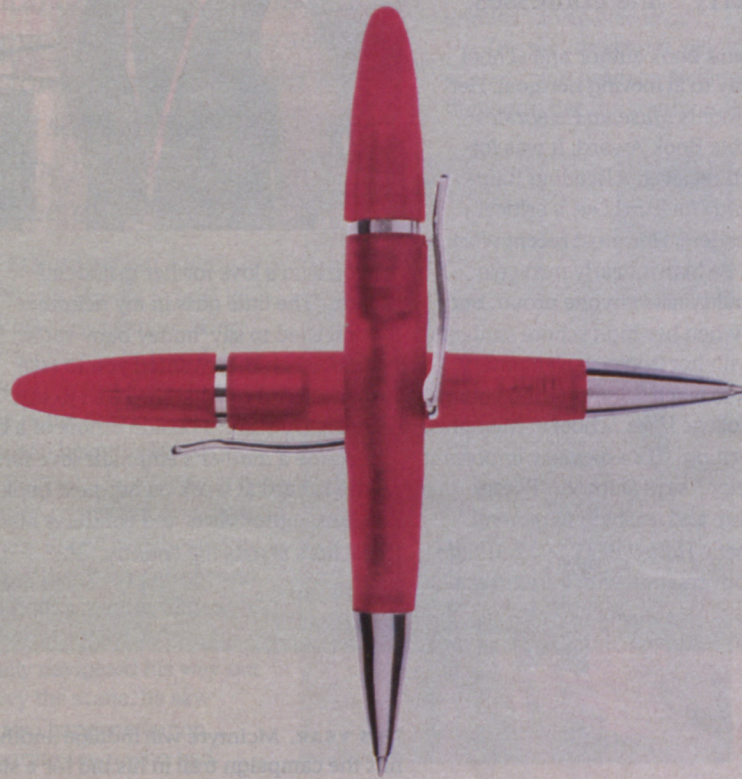
—VANESSA ST. LEGER

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Sabrina Holcomb, section editor, at sholcomb@nea.org

PEOPLE

THE JEFFERSON ALICE FAYE DUNCAN JOHN MCINTYRE



Donate.

When you make a financial donation to the Red Cross, it goes to support those who need it the most. The people you help might even be from your own neighborhood when emergencies strike. When we come together, we become part of something bigger than us all. To offer your financial support, please contact your local American Red Cross chapter today.



TOGETHERWE Can donate | Make a plan | Build a kit | Get trained | Volunteer | Give blood

Together, we can save a life

resources

- 55 **NEA Grants** NEA Foundation grants covering all subject areas are waiting for you.
- 57 **Take Note** Keep schools safe for all students with help from NEA Human and Civil Rights.
- 58 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Protect your income in the event of a disability.
- 58 **On the Web** Work collaboratively online with colleagues to perfect your teaching materials.
- 59 **Books by NEA Members** A new guide gives tips to keep young children safe.
- 60 **In Print** Save your sanity with 200 quick fixes for everyday elementary classroom problems.
- 61 **NEA's Read Across America** Celebrating the diversity of children and children's literature.
- 61 **Diversity Calendar** Remembering the heritage of American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- 61 **What's Up at HIN** ESPs can celebrate American Education Week with free resources.
- 62 **On TV** A new PBS show teaches about cultural diversity in America.

Get Ready for Next Year With a Grant from The NEA Foundation

TAKE A MOMENT this winter to prepare for great things next year. There's plenty of time to submit an application to The NEA Foundation by the **February 1** grant review date.

Applications are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis for both **Innovation Grants** and **Learning & Leadership**

Grants, so it's never too late to apply. If you apply by February 1, you'll know if your grant is approved by June 15. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

NEA members like you have applied for and received over 1,500 grants throughout the years. Read about their projects at www.neafoundation.org, and then submit your own idea. Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are available for all subjects, including the arts, literacy, science, and technology.



**THE NEA
FOUNDATION**

www.neafoundation.org

All members who are practicing K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals, or higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities are encouraged to apply.

We now offer bigger and better grants—up to \$5,000 per project—to fund your BIG ideas.

Applying for a grant is easy. Visit www.neafoundation.org today for more information, including guidelines and an application. Or call 202-822-7840.

GRANTS FOR TOLERANCE

The Teaching Tolerance project of the Southern Poverty Law Center offers grants of up to \$2,000 to K-12 classroom teachers for implementing tolerance and youth activism projects in their schools and communities.

Projects funded by Teaching Tolerance tend to be:

SMALL-SCALE, resourceful, and student-focused, promoting acceptance of diversity, peacemaking, community service, or any other aspect of tolerance education;
CLEARLY DEFINED, well-integrated, and tailored to the specified needs of particular learners and their communities;
ECONOMICALLY RESPONSIBLE, involving staff participation, community volunteers, and in-kind contributions wherever possible;
SUSTAINABLE in some way, rather than one-time-only events or activities.

There is no deadline for proposals, and grants are restricted to one per applicant or school per school year.

For more information, go to www.tolerance.org/teach/expand/gra/index.jsp. To apply, download and complete the application, then mail it with the required attachments to Grants Administrator, Teaching Tolerance Grants, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104.

NASA AEROSPACE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

The NASA Urban and Rural Community Enrichment Program (URCEP) is designed to serve middle school students in urban and rural areas. In preparation for the three-day program, NASA URCEP specialists train core educators as a team to conduct interdisciplinary aerospace activities in school districts. The program is then planned and implemented in participating schools by the URCEP team. Using simple demonstrations and scale models of aeronautical and space hardware, the URCEP specialists explain how basic scientific principles are applied in the exploration of aeronautics and space. Technical and logistical assistance is supplied by the NASA URCEP coordinator.

Superintendents, with sug-



NEA VALUEBUILDER • INVESTMENT VALUE FOR NEA MEMBERS

"What's the benefit of increasing my monthly retirement savings?"

Even a modest monthly increase could be worth an extra \$40,000 to you at retirement.

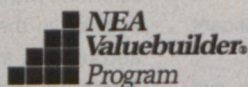
Suppose you have 30 years to go until retirement. An increase of just \$25 a month, for example, can add almost \$40,000 to your retirement savings, assuming you earn 8 1/2% interest, compounded daily.

If you have fewer years before you retire, you *still* can increase your nest egg by contributing more to your retirement savings starting now. It's a great idea — especially if you're finished with other responsibilities like paying off a mortgage or educating your kids.

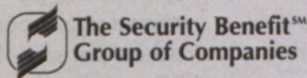
Right now is an excellent time to contact your NEA Valuebuilder® financial counselor. See for yourself how increasing your contributions a little bit today can reward you with a bigger retirement fund tomorrow.

Call your NEA Valuebuilder Financial Counselor today toll free to personally take you through the retirement savings program.

1-877-NEA8668 ext 3655



Security Distributors, Inc. is a member of the Security Benefit Group of Companies.



You should consider the investment objectives, risks, and charges and expenses of the mutual funds and variable annuities available under the NEA Valuebuilder Program carefully before investing. You may obtain a prospectus that contains this and other information about the mutual funds and variable annuities by calling our customer service center at 1-800-888-2461. You should read the prospectus carefully before investing. Investing in variable annuities and mutual funds involves risk and there is no guarantee of investment results.

Variable annuities available through the NEA Valuebuilder Program are distributed by Security Distributors, Inc. and issued by Security Benefit Life Insurance Company (Form V6029). The NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund TSA, a Custodial Account under 403(b)(7) of the Internal Revenue Code, and the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund 457, a Trust Account under 457(g) of the Internal Revenue Code, make available various mutual funds for investment. NEA Valuebuilder is a registered trademark of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation. Variable annuities are long-term investments suitable for retirement investing, and subject to fees, charges and market risks, including loss of principal.



You'll receive a complimentary copy of our MoneyGuide for members.



VBNT1104

gestions from principals, are asked to select core teachers for the training. The core educators work for six weeks with the aerospace program in their schools where they lead interdisciplinary teams of teachers in interactions with the principal and faculty.

For more, go to <http://aesp.nasa.okstate.edu/urcep/index.html> or write to: NASA Headquarters; Education Division; Attn: URCEP Program Manager; Code N; Washington, DC 20549.

SAVING ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom Kids' Summit, an essay program for children ages 9–12, encourages kids to use their creative energy and love of animals to think of ways they can help save endangered species. In one page, students must answer this question: "What threatened or endangered species in North America do you



most want to save and how would you help save it?" One aspiring conservationist from each state and the District of Columbia will receive a trip to attend the Wild Kingdom Kids' Summit next May in Los Angeles. Visit www.wildkingdom.com for more information, including a special site for teachers with suggested classroom activities and curriculum.

Take Note

A Week To Celebrate You!

Join us **November 14–20, 2004**, to celebrate **American Education Week** when we'll recognize the educators and school staff who keep our children safe and healthy, as well as help them achieve.

Wednesday (November 17) will be a special day to honor the school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teachers' aides, and other education support professionals who positively impact our school communities. Friday (November 19) will be a special day to honor the work of substitute educators.

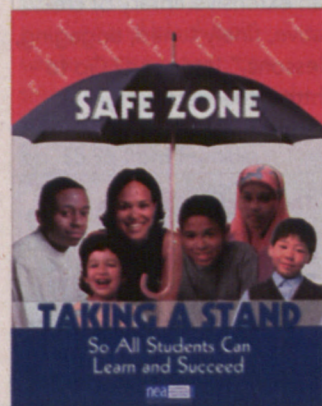
This year's theme is *Celebrating the American Dream...the Dream that Begins in Our Nation's Classrooms*. For more information on American Education Week, ideas on how to celebrate it, or to download a poster and artwork bearing this year's theme, go to www.nea.org/aew.



Ensuring Safe Schools

NEA Human and Civil Rights' new "Safe Zone" poster shows students that their schools are taking a stand against racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, religious bias, and other forms of bias and discrimination. The poster is available online at www.nea.org/schoolsafety/. In our classrooms, playgrounds, restrooms, offices, libraries, buses, and elsewhere, both students and school personnel can be proactive in raising awareness of those instances when differences are mocked, devalued, or simply silenced, and in challenging all forms of bullying and harassment.

This requires courage and more "homework" to learn about bias and how to address it with students. Your state and local affiliate can provide resources and schedule diversity trainings. We realize these topics continue to generate discomfort, cautiousness, and disagreement, namely, homophobia concern-



ing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students. NEA and its affiliates provide trainings, resource handbooks, and other forms of support for creating safe environments for all students. For more, contact your state affiliate Human and Civil Rights coordinator or Kevin Kumashiro (kkumashiro@nea.org, 202-822-7439), Linda Bacon (lbacon@nea.org, 202-822-7724), or Al-Tony Gilmore (agilmore@nea.org, 202-822-7395).

Improve Your Work Life Starting Today.

Fund It! Contribute to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

Be directly involved in helping to ensure that recently elected legislators and members of Congress work hard to support public education and make the right political decisions affecting your job. Make your voice heard in politics. Fund it!



Contribute to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Go to www.neafund.org.

Human and Civil Rights Awards

You're invited to participate in NEA's 39th Annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner, July 3, 2005, in Los Angeles, California. Please join us in:

- keeping alive the spirit of the American Teachers Association,
- honoring individuals and affiliates for their human and civil rights contributions,
- celebrating NEA's multicultural roots,
- recharging ourselves for the struggle ahead.

But don't just attend the dinner. Get involved by nominating an individual, organization, colleague, or affiliate for an award. New this year: Complete forms online at www.nea.org/annualmeeting/hcraawards/. Note these dates:

- **DECEMBER 15, 2004**—Deadline for submission of award nomination forms to NEA Human and Civil Rights.
- **JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005**—Selection of awardees by the NEA Executive Committee, based on recommendations by the Human and Civil Rights Committee.

For more, contact: Sabrina Williams, (sawilliams@nea.org), Human and Civil Rights, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Books for Schools

Sponsored by the Heart of America Foundation, the Books From The Heart program finds books that are not being used and gets them to where they're needed most—into the hands of children and onto the empty shelves at school libraries. Download a registration form to become a Books From the Heart recipient at www.heartofamerica.org/pdf/recipient-form.pdf. Recipients must take final responsibility for the quality and appropriateness of the books provided and agree that books will be placed on library and classroom shelves and given directly to students for home use.



Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOUR INCOME DISAPPEARED TODAY? Are you prepared to provide for yourself and those you love in the event a serious accident or illness befalls you?

Consider this statistic: One in seven people become disabled for at least five years before reaching age 65.¹

Unless you've planned ahead, losing your income could have devastating effects. The NEA Income Protection Plan® is a Short-Term Disability plan specially designed to help provide an income when you are disabled and unable to work due to a covered accident or sickness. In most states, you can also add a Long-Term Disability Rider to extend your benefits to age 67 or older.

For more information about this important benefit, call your NEA Income Protection Plan Representative

at 1-888-461-1612 (Monday thru Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST) or visit online at www.neamb.com.

¹ Source: Sue Stevens, Morningstar, November 2000



TRAVEL SMART! Collette Vacations, provider of the NEA vacation travel program, offers these tips for members planning future excursions:

1. Make sure you have comprehensive travel protection.

Because of the tragic events of September 11, most travel insurance policies do not allow passengers to cancel for any reason, even because of acts of terrorism. However, Collette provides members the option of purchasing a cancellation waiver that does allow passengers to cancel for any reason—up to the day of departure. The waiver ensures that you will recoup all of your money except for the cost of the cancellation waiver itself.

2. Avoid tour operator default—choose a financially stable travel provider. Look for an operator with a strong financial rating based on an independent audit and one that belongs to an organization like USTOA, which is composed of the country's top travel companies.

3. Only work with travel providers that accept credit cards as a form of payment. Paying for your trip by credit card within 60 days of departure guarantees you 100 percent trip protection. Credit card companies, by law, must refund 100 percent of funds as long as the service was not provided and the customer notified the credit card company within 60 days of the charge appearing on the customer's monthly statement.

For more information about the great travel opportunities available to members through Collette Vacations, call 1-800-528-1923 or go online to www.neamb.com/discount/collette.jsp.

GO TO WWW.NEAMB.COM FOR VALUABLE CONSUMER INFORMATION AND LINKS TO ALL NEA MEMBER BENEFITS PRODUCTS.

On The Web

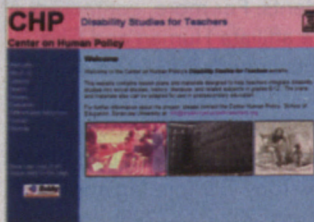
SOUND SCIENCE

Why does that annoying song get stuck in my head? This Exploratorium Web site attempts to answer this and other music-related questions by examining the science of music. Through movies and online exhibits, kids of all ages can compose, mix, and play with music in new ways while having fun. Exhibits include "Kitchen Sink-o-pation" where you can make your own music in a virtual kitchen. Go to www.exploratorium.edu/music/index.html.



LEARNING ABOUT DISABILITY

According to the Disability Studies for Teachers Web site, 38 to 52.6 million Americans have disabilities. This site, maintained by the Center for Human Rights, promotes the classroom examination of disability in relation to history, culture, and society. Go to www.disabilitystudiesforteachers.org/ to find lesson plans, essays, teaching materials, and links to other sites that will help you look at disabilities from a societal, rather than a medical, perspective.



TAKING THE WEB OUTSIDE

Educators itching to get students outdoors can stop by the Hands on the Land site to join a network of classrooms that encourage learning through the environment. This site has resources on using the land as a source for historical, archaeological, and environmental learning. Teachers can browse through teaching materials, educational programs, and projects for lessons on the ecosystem, animal habitats, and more. K-12 students can share essays, artwork, and personal Web sites or take part in interactive projects. Go to www.handsontheland.org/home.cfm.

VIRTUAL TEACHERS LOUNGE

Based on "wiki" technology that allows any registered user to post and edit lesson plans, handouts, and other resources online, this site is designed to allow educators to work collaboratively to refine and perfect their teaching materials. Creator Rob Lucas' vision is to eventually have users "develop an extensive library of creative, finely tuned, engaging, lessons." Intrigued? Go to <http://teacherslounge.editme.com/>.

The Teachers' Lounge

Many Minds Make Light Work

UPDATE 8/14
—Welcome to anyone clicking over from the "Tech Central" article. If you like what you see, please forward the URL to any teachers you know.
—The pages with the most resources are General Resources, Speaking of Learning, 101 and 102 Classroom Management, 101 and 102 Social Studies, 101 and 102 Language Arts, 101 and 102 Science, 101 and 102 Math, elementary math, language arts, social studies and science topics.
—Most of the other pages are blank and waiting for contributions. The words you see there, like "Unit Plans" are headings to help organize later posts, not dead links.
—Most of the resources I've posted were collected from Teach for America North Carolina teachers, an engaged

NATIONAL SUMMIT ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION

Over the next few years, NEA will release a series of reports on the Status of Education on Underserved Groups, including a report on Asian and Pacific Islander students, due out in May 2005. The API Report will include information on diversity among API students, policy analyses, implications for classroom practice, and additional resources. To assist in producing the content of this report, NEA will partner with APAICS (Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies) to hold a national summit January 7-8, 2004, that brings together researchers, national leaders, and NEA members and staff to offer their perspectives on problems and promising strategies for addressing API issues in education.

The Summit will include presentations on initiatives at the local and national levels regarding API education. Participants will also collaborate in sessions on API students, policy issues, and implications for classroom practice. Seven of the leading researchers on API education will describe the latest research, and participants will divide into working groups to generate additional information for the publication.

OPPORTUNITY TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS: NEA Human and Civil Rights wants to hear from NEA members about the questions they would like to see addressed in the Summit and in the final API Report. These questions will be answered by the experts at a special panel session and their answers will be posted online and featured in a future issue of *NEA Today*. NEA members can send their questions to Kevin Kumashiro, Senior Program Specialist, kkumashiro@nea.org, 202-822-7439, no later than Friday, December 3.



BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

SAFE FROM STRANGERS

By Gerri Willevor

Useful for educators but designed primarily as a guide for parents, this book offers practical methods and effective strategies to prevent abductions and keep children safe. Twenty-five accessible, succinct tips are given that include everything from reminding kids to keep personal information to themselves to Internet safety. A retired teacher and black belt wrote the book with contributions from FBI Special Agent David Freyman. 64 pp. \$5.95 from Franklin



Mason Press. To order, go to www.franklin-mason-press.com.

GROWING YOUR MUSICIAN

By Tony Bancroft

With valuable advice and meaningful anecdotes, this practical, step-by-step guide is written for parents who want to help their young musicians excel in the school band or orchestra. Compiling practice strategies and other tips into accessible charts and sidebars, a credentialed band director allows all parents, regardless of their level of experience, to be involved in their child's musical development. 118 pp. \$29 from MENC: The National Association for Music



Education. To order, call 800-828-0229.

KIDTIPS

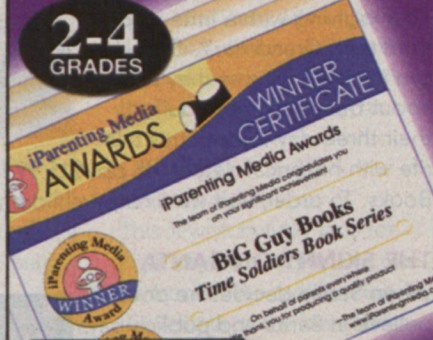
By Kathy Young

Written by a veteran special education teacher, this book provides students in grades 3-8 with more than 250 simple, field-tested study tips, arranged in a program format, to help them succeed. The tips cover content areas such as reading, math, and spelling, as well as skills such as completing projects and self advocacy. The book includes a CD-ROM with PDF files of tip cards, so teachers can print them out for their own use. 145 pp. \$29 from Attainment Company, Inc. Go to www.AttainmentCompany.com to order.



Parents and Educators agree: Kids LOVE READING OUR BOOKS!

2-4 GRADES



"...a Must-Read for every red-blooded, imaginative, adventure-seeking, American child."
Lyle Hartman
3rd Grade Teacher
Carlsbad, CA



"...undeniably the creme de la creme of children's books."
Aleta Sorensen
& daughter
Escondido, CA



FREE LESSON PLANS!

"AWESOME books ...terrific for the reluctant reader!"
Barbara Vanderhorst
School Librarian

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In Print

THANKSGIVING WITH THE PILGRIMS

In *Thanksgiving on Plymouth Plantation* by Diane Stanley, time-traveling twins take a trip back to 1621 for a Plymouth Thanksgiving with a little help from their Grandma. K-5 readers can join the twins as they learn about being a Pilgrim during their three-day feast in this tale rife with historical details. 48 pp. \$15.99 from Joanna Cotler Books. To order, visit www.harperchildrens.com.



THE SKINNY ON SANTA

When Stevie decides he doesn't believe in Santa and publicly says so, worldwide naughtiness surges. So Santa decides to make a believer out of Stevie by taking him on a behind-the-scenes look at Kringle Industries. Author James Solheim and illustrator Barry Gott fill *Santa's Secrets Revealed: All Your Questions Answered About Santa's Super Sleigh, His Flying Reindeer, and Other Wonders* with lots of humor and imagination. For ages 5-8. 40 pp. \$15.95 from Carolrhoda Books. To order call 800-328-4929.



Fostering Cultural Understanding

One World: Connecting Communities, Cultures, and Classrooms is a free, NEA-endorsed, 10-lesson education program for fourth-sixth graders to help them understand and appreciate diversity. The program—an interdisciplinary, multi-tiered curriculum for educators, students, and families—fills a void, giving teachers and parents materials not previously available to help them address critical issues surrounding cultural understanding.



One World was developed through the support and vision of the NFL and NFLPA (Players Association)—partners of NEA's Read Across America—and created and written in collaboration with Scholastic Inc. and Facing History and Ourselves, a national civil rights education organization. Find free copies of all materials, as well as online interactive challenges for students, at <http://scholastic.com/oneworld>. All materials are reproducible and designed to be downloaded and printed from the Internet, and all lessons are based on national standards.

STAYING SANE

What do you do when a child has painted not only the paper, but his clothes and the wall as well? How do you cope with an area too small to hold all the learning tools you need? You'll find tips for dealing with these and myriad other classroom problems in Sharon MacDonald's *Sanity Savers for Early Childhood Teachers: 200 Quick Fixes for Everything from Big Messes to Small Budgets*. Witty and creative, this easy-to-use book offers solutions and moral support for new and veteran teachers. 128 pp. \$14.95 from Gryphon House. To order, go to www.ghbooks.com.



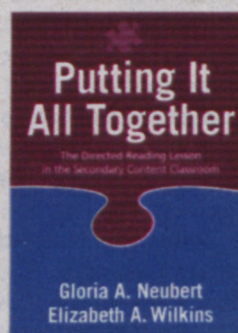
DESEGREGATION IN PICTURES

Toni Morrison has collected a treasure chest of archival photographs that depict the historical events surrounding school desegregation in *Remember: The Journey to School Integration*. These unforgettable images serve as the inspiration for the simple, provocative text—a fictional account of the dialogue and emotions of the children who lived during the era of "separate but equal" schooling. The book is a unique pictorial and narrative journey that introduces children to a watershed period in American history and its relevance to us today. 80 pp. \$18 from Houghton Mifflin. To order, go to www.amazon.com.



READING DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

In their hands-on textbook *Putting It All Together: The Directed Reading Lesson in the Secondary Content Classroom*, Gloria A. Neubert and Elizabeth A. Wilkins use their directed reading framework to help secondary education students develop their own reading lesson plans involving different content areas in the classroom. 256 pp. \$30 from Allyn and Bacon/Longman Publishers. To order, visit www.ablongman.com/catalog/academic.



A BIRD'S TALE

Based on a true story, *Arrowhawk*, by Lola M. Schaefer, uses prose and vivid illustrations to tell the tale of an endangered bird, a red-tailed hawk, that beats the odds after it is struck by a poacher's arrow and rescued by humans. The book is beautifully illustrated by Gaby Swiatkowska. 32 pp. \$16.95 from Henry Holt and Company Books for Young Readers. To order, call 888-330-8477.



Honoring the Diversity Of Children and Books

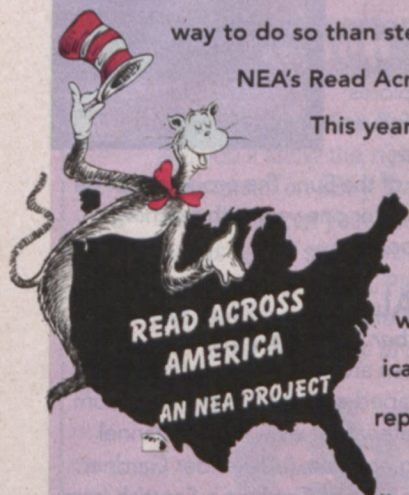
November's the month to honor children's authors with Children's Book Week November 15–21, and what better

way to do so than step up your plans to join NEA's Read Across America!

This year's Read Across America resource kit celebrates the diversity of children and children's literature with its Read Across America: Where It's Hat theme and reproducible materials. The kit features a new Read Across America logo

poster, as well as posters for our Get a Kick Out of Reading bilingual program with Major League Soccer, ZOOM into reading and community service with Youth Service America and ZOOM, and Where It's Hat multicultural theme. To request a kit, go to www.nea.org/readacross.

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DIVERSITY CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 1–30— AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

The month set aside by presidential proclamation to honor and remember the unique heritage of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

NOVEMBER 14— ID AL-FITR

This Muslim day of feasting celebrates the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

NOVEMBER 15–21— YOUTH APPRECIATION WEEK

A week to recognize our youth for their talents and their contributions to the community. Sponsored by Optimist International: www.optimist.org.

NOVEMBER 20— ANNIVERSARY OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

A national holiday in Mexico to celebrate the start of the social revolution begun in 1910.

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 1— MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT BEGINNING

On this day in 1955 in Alabama, Rosa Mae Parks refused to give her seat to a white passenger on a bus and was arrested, sparking the December 5 bus boycott.

DECEMBER 8–15— HANUKKAH

This Jewish holiday lasts for eight days and nights and commemorates the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees.

DECEMBER 25— CHRISTMAS

The birth of Christ is celebrated on this Christian holiday by attending church, exchanging gifts, and singing carols.

DECEMBER 26— JANUARY 1—KWANZAA

Related to the spirit and rituals of African harvest festivals, this African-American celebration promotes family building, teaches history, and develops unity.

What's Up at HIN



NEA HIN LOVES EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS!

The NEA Health Information Network would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of NEA ESP members on November 17, National Education Support Professionals Day! In doing so, we encourage you to take advantage of the variety of resources we have available for custodians, school nurses, paraprofessionals, school bus drivers, and more! Resources such as the *Red Book: Exposure to Blood on the Job*, *Take a Deep Breath and Thank Your Custodian* (guide to indoor air quality), *Tomorrow's Buses for Today's Children* (Clean School Bus USA brochure), and *Asthma Inhalers* (poster) are all available at no charge. To order single or multiple copies, visit www.neahin.org/resources/pubs.htm.

EPA ALERTS SCHOOLS TO ASBESTOS HAZARDS

Did you know that even though schools have the option of removing asbestos-containing materials, it is more likely that they chose to manage the materials instead? When asbestos materials are disturbed, the fibers can be released into the air and inhaled by stu-

dents and school staff, and can eventually lead to lung cancer, asbestosis, or mesothelioma. EPA's current issue of *Enforcement Alert* focuses on asbestos in schools and provides a list of asbestos containing building materials and information about the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA).

To access the *Alert*, go to www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/newsletters/civil/enfalert/aheraalert0721.pdf. For more information on asbestos in schools, go to www.epa.gov/asbestos/asbestos_in_schools.html.

CELEBRATE WORLD AIDS DAY 2004

World AIDS Day, celebrated around the globe on December 1, will highlight the progress made in the battle against the epidemic—and will bring into focus the remaining challenges. This year's theme is "Women, Girls, HIV, and AIDS." As we see the ever-increasing impact of the HIV epidemic on women and girls, it is imperative that we put a spotlight on the unique issues they face. For more information on World AIDS Day, visit the NEA HIN Web site at www.neahin.org/programs/reproductive/index.htm#hiv aids.

On TV

POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER

PBS, weekdays 4-6 p.m., ET. Check local listings.

This new *Arthur* spin-off for ages 4-8 follows Buster's travels with his pilot father as they fly a Latin rock group around the United States, Canada, and Mexico for a concert tour. Busters "mails" his friends live-action postcards that explore the cultural diversity of the areas he visits. Blending live-action footage with animation, the 30-minute episodes expose children to different cultures in North America and helps develop the literacy, language, and communication skills of non-native English speakers. A companion Web site at <http://pbskidsgo.org/buster> features interactive games and resources for kids, and a comprehensive teacher's guide for elementary classrooms, including a section on using the series with English-language learners.



NICK NEWS: SPECIAL EDITION

Nickelodeon; November 3, 12, and 22; 6 a.m.; ET.

Visit with Native American children living on three different reservations and take a look at the similarities and differences they share with white American kids in "This Land Was My Land: Kids on the Reservations." This 30-minute episode of the news magazine specials created by Linda Ellerbee for kids in grades 4-6 can be taped and used in the classroom for one year. Teaching materials are available at www.teachers.nick.com.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: THEY MADE AMERICA

PBS, November 8, 9-11 p.m., ET, and November 15 and 22, 9-10 p.m., ET. Check local listings.

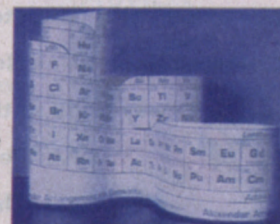
This three-part series from *American Experience* looks at the people who invented new systems, new solutions, and improved technology, such as Samuel Colt, who invented handguns, and

Juan Trippe, who started Pan American Airways. The series rightly focuses on the individual achievement, but looks past each inventor to examine the impact these advances had on our American society, politics, and economics.

STRONG CHEMISTRY

Discovery Channel, November 11, 9 a.m., ET.

This hourlong documentary explains the discovery of the elements and the origin of the periodic table, explores compounds and composites, discusses the creation and trade of diamonds, and looks at the inside of the Sun. The program can be taped and used in the classroom for one year with teaching materials at www.discoveryschool.com.



CIVIL WAR JOURNAL

The History Channel, November 22, 6 a.m., ET.

The *Civil War Journal* series uses archival materials to explore the Civil War era and can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with teaching materials at www.historychannel.com/classroom. This hourlong episode, "Alexander Gardner: War Photographer," profiles the life of Gardner, a Scottish immigrant who visually chronicled the Civil War.

IN THE MIX

PBS, November 20-27, check local listings for times.

This week's episode of the PBS series, entitled "The Way We See it: What Makes a School Worth Going To?" follows four youth media teams as they set out to answer this question by creating short personal documentaries about their schools. One documentary follows Thomas, who does poorly in academic subjects until he discovers unrecognized skills in a school arts program and gains the confidence to tackle more academic subjects. The videos depict a road map of hope and success for public school systems. Visit www.inthemix.org for transcripts, discussion guides, and more.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning magazine at www.ciconline.org.

NEA's Commitment to Diversity in Leadership

In practice and in policy, the National Education Association has a history of supporting diversity in leadership. In 1964 the NEA began eradicating racial segregation throughout its affiliates and staff, and in 1966 the Association merged with the all-Black American Teachers Association. For many years, as part of the effort to integrate the Association, NEA's policies guaranteed governance representation for ethnic minorities.

However, throughout the '80s the Association had to amend several policies in order to comply with the Landrum Griffin Act, which made it illegal to guarantee minority representation. One such policy was amended in 1988. In 1988 the NEA Representative Assembly adopted the following affirmative action policy regarding the Association presidency:

NEA Constitution, Article IV, Section 4. Affirmative Action Procedure.

By December 1 of each membership year immediately preceding the next membership year in which a presidential election is to be held (i.e., approximately 18 months prior to the date of the election), appropriate information about the office of president and the electoral process, including all relevant timelines, shall be sent to each of the ethnic-minority special interest groups identified in Bylaw 12; and

During the membership year in which the aforesaid presidential election

is to be held, a copy of this section of the Constitution, with an appropriate explanation as to its background and intent, shall be included in (a) an Association publication sent to all members by December 1 and (b) the material that is sent to the delegates to that year's Representative Assembly.

If after any period of eleven (11) consecutive membership years a member of an ethnic-minority group has not served as President, the Association shall take such steps as may be legally permissible to elect a member of an ethnic-minority group.

During the debate at the 1988 Representative Assembly, John Wilson, a North Carolina delegate speaking in favor of the amendment, aptly summarized the intent of this policy:

"...Fellow delegates, last year we had to remove a part of our Constitution that guaranteed that at the end of 11 years if an ethnic minority were not elected president, that nominations would be limited to an ethnic minority...even though we had to eliminate that guarantee, we shouldn't eliminate our affirmative action commitment to assuring that our organization will reflect the diversity of our membership...It is an affirmative action amendment. It guarantees information, it guarantees accessibility, but it does not guarantee that anyone will be elected unless the delegates so choose to do that."

In accordance with the above provision, this message serves as a reminder of the Association's continued commitment to diversity in leadership.

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An 'A' Should Be an 'A'

Families move. Report cards should stay put.

BY J. ELIZABETH GLADDEN

LET'S STANDARDIZE OUR REPORT CARDS. Already the push is on for nationally standardized achievement tests, so why not a standardized report card? Report cards reflect achievement during the whole school year, while standardized test scores show only the results from a few days.

After moving through four states with children in public schools, and teaching in yet another state before I married a career military man, I have come to realize that each school district has its own report card, and many principals give teachers the leeway to grade students at their own discretion.

One first-grade teacher may rate students "excellent" while another at the same school may use only "satisfactory" or "needs improvement," thereby giving the upcoming second-grade teacher the impression that one student was excellent while another was only satisfactory, even if their performance was identical.

As a mother, I have been frustrated trying to deal with report cards from different districts.

For my seventh-grade child, 93-100 is an A, 86-92 is a B, and below 70 is failing. My sixth grader has the more common 90-100 for an A, and so on. So 85 turns into a B for one child, but the same score is a C for another child.

Meanwhile, my first grader receives E for excellent, VG for very good, S for satisfactory, etc. It gets confusing very quickly, especially when my seventh grader has already attended six different schools.

But what started me thinking about standardized report cards was a non-academic area on my first grader's report. Numbers 1 through 5 were given for abstract concepts including "Takes pride in doing neat work." My daughter got low marks for "pride."

The teacher told me the reason was that my daughter rushes, but my daughter insists she always does her best work.

How can a teacher determine whether or not a six-year-old "takes pride in doing neat work"? What appears neat to one six-year-old is completely different from what another first

grader might see, though both are very proud of their work, marking their name boldly across the paper to claim it.

What educational authority determined that anybody could accurately measure a child's level of pride in his or her work, and then decided to place that on a report card for teachers to judge as best they can?

Children learn very quickly the importance of the report card. And once a student is labeled by a grade, it is hard to break the mold.

Then again, if a B/C student with a tough grading scale were to move to a district with a more lenient curve, would that student suddenly become an A/B student? Is this fair?

I think students themselves would rather have the same grade curve, no matter which school they attend.

Could we come up with an unbiased report, one that could be used in a wide variety of schools with children from many different backgrounds and socioeconomic situations?

A panel of experts in the field of education representing the various schools of thought

on teaching and evaluating students could put together guidelines that would enable teachers across the nation to "label" students more fairly and accurately. A test group of schools representing a mini-America could test the model report card.

Standardized report cards? It's an idea worth looking into. [nea](http://nea.org)

J. Elizabeth Gladden taught for three years in San Antonio, Texas, and is now a master's degree candidate at Clemson University in South Carolina. She is a member of the NEA Student Program.



Even a teacher-Mom can have trouble figuring out the many different types of report cards children bring home.

"I think students themselves would rather have the same grade curve, no matter which school they attend."

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